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THE STATE OF THE SOUTH 2004:
Fifty Years After Brown v. Board of Education

A Report from MDC Inc.

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MDC is **M**aking a **D**ifference in **C**ommunities in the South through expanding opportunity, reducing poverty, and building inclusive civic cultures. MDC analyzes trends to identify challenges that impede progress for the South and its people, and we address those challenges from multiple angles with an emphasis on approaches that benefit poor people and places. Our core strategies include developing responsive public policies; developing and demonstrating effective programs; building individual, institutional, and community capacity for progress; and informing the public dialogue.

Established in 1967 to help North Carolina make the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy and from a segregated to an integrated workforce, MDC has spent the last 37 years publishing research and developing policies and programs to strengthen the workforce, foster economic development, and remove the barriers between people and jobs.

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Dedication

To George H. Esser Jr.

1948-1963, Professor of Public Law and Government, Institute of Government, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
1963-1969, Executive Director, The North Carolina Fund
1969-1972, Program Officer for the South, Ford Foundation
1972-1976, Executive Director, Southern Regional Council

In February 1968, as he neared completion of his important work at the helm of The North Carolina Fund, George H. Esser Jr. wrote a long, insightful memorandum, reflecting on lessons learned at the Fund and offering recommendations for the advancement of the South. In that memo, Esser said, "The South must develop real opportunity – and equality of opportunity – for *all* people *within* the region – in the political sense, in the social sense, in the economic sense, and in the educational sense. And the South must be prepared to make the commitment to change, and provide the resources, to make this possible."

Under George's guidance, approximately a year after that memo the Fund launched a spin-off originally known as the North Carolina Manpower Development Corporation. Founded to prepare one state's workforce for a growing industrial economy, MDC Inc. became a catalyst for change throughout the South.

The staff and board of MDC dedicate the fifth *State of the South* report to George in appreciation for his critical role in creating MDC and defining its mission. We trust that these reports adhere to the spirit of his 1968 memo in which he observed that the South needs an institution to serve as "Educator…in undertaking research, in defining issues and in formulating potential solutions for Southern problems."

We also take this opportunity to salute George Esser for a lifetime of service to the South. At The North Carolina Fund, a pioneering effort in fighting poverty, and at the Southern Regional Council, an influential civil-rights think-tank, Esser illuminated the way toward a more just and a more competitive region.

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Foreword

State of the South 2004 is the fifth edition in MDC's *State of the South* series, which examines the region's economic and demographic landscape and how Southerners are faring within it. This edition considers the region through the lens of public education, 50 years after the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. That revolutionary ruling struck a hard blow to American apartheid and began the process of allowing millions of black and brown Southerners full access to America's principal ladder of opportunity: good public schools. *Brown v. Board* forced America to correct a shameful and misguided history of racial exclusion in education. Once liberated, our people and our region were able to accelerate the South's progress toward economic parity with the rest of the United States – a story we have documented in previous *State of the South* reports.

Today it is the future, not the past, that compels the South, its leaders, and its citizens to focus anew on creating public schools that work well for every child. A new apartheid is gripping Southern education, less visible but just as lethal as the old form. Rather than defining difference by race alone, the new inequality reflects demographic, economic, and social forces that influence where we live, who are neighbors are, and how our schools perform. Two generations of strong economic growth have birthed affluent suburbs in every Southern state. These fortunate enclaves and the well-resourced schools that serve them contrast vividly with our struggling inner cities, small towns, and remote rural areas, where schools often vie in vain to attract and retain good teachers and support enriched curricula. A stubborn achievement gap between whites and Asians on one side and blacks and Latinos on the other means that schools are preparing some but not all for a future of bright opportunity. Much as we might have hoped, the death of legally sanctioned segregation has not yielded full equality in the education Southern children receive.

Why should we care? First, as this report vividly shows, demographic analysis tells us that the South will draw on black and Latino workers in ever higher numbers as our region grows and our native-born workforce ages. Yet the people we will call on more than ever to run our factories, deliver our health care, and manage our government are the students that the South educates most poorly today. Economic necessity compels the South to stretch for universal excellence in public education.

But economic concern is not all. The South is no longer just black and white; we are a technicolor region. Whether we become a high-performing, multi-racial society, capable of living together harmoniously or degenerate into a region marked by cross-cultural tension will depend on how well our public schools teach today's youth how to live, learn, and work with people are different. This much we know from our own sad, self-inflicted history: divided societies do not develop and thrive. Public schools are the only civic institution that brings together people in their formative years across lines of

gender, race, income and religion for the explicit purpose of learning how to think and live. If our public schools mirror rather than counteract the South's growing tendency toward social and economic segregation, we will have squandered our first and best resource for becoming a united society.

Nearly 2,000 years ago, Seneca wrote these instructive words: "patriotism is worth competition with our ancestors." Starting 50 years ago, our ancestors took a critical step on the hard and ultimately fruitful path of lifting the South from a racially divided, educational also-ran into a region capable of competing with the rest of the world. We have many to thank: civil rights pioneers who made no peace with inequality, New South governors who staked their political futures on education reform, and thousands of teachers, administrators, and engaged parents who worked on the front lines. Now we face equally deep challenges without the force of law to drive change. The compelling need and the urgent necessity is universal excellence in public education.

Can we compete with our ancestors? Can we afford not to?

David L. Dodson
President, MDC Inc.

I. Introduction: Once Again, A Defining Moment

> *Discrimination is not limited to race. The line that separates the well-educated from the poorly educated is the harshest fault line of all. This is where we must begin. We must get the message out to every household and especially every poor household that the only road out of poverty runs by the schoolhouse.*
>
> – William Winter, former Governor of Mississippi

Fifty years ago, the South arrived at a moment of truth. In its *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, issued on May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court began the dismantling of public schools legally segregated by race.

Over time, subsequent court rulings as well as federal civil rights laws prevailed in striking down the South's de jure segregation of whites and blacks. Today, most young Southerners receive a far better education from the region's public schools than was possible during the era of segregation. What's more, once unshackled from the Jim Crow system, the South found itself liberated to join the economic mainstream of America.

Is the South better off now than in 1954? The answer is, indisputably, yes – in education, in economic opportunity, in quality of life. The South has changed a lot since the *Brown* ruling. But now the South has arrived at another defining moment.

This time, the moment arises not from a single, dramatic event. Rather, it results from social and economic trends many years in the making.

In 1954, educational inequity was embedded in law. In 2004, the laws have changed but stubborn inequities persist. Many Southern students face unequal and inadequate educational opportunity because they are poor, black, or Latino, or live in inner cities or rural areas.

Fifty years after *Brown*, too many students – especially in schools with a heavy majority of students from low-income, African American, or Latino homes – do not get the education they need to thrive in today's economy and to participate as citizens in our democracy. The South's schools propel more students than ever toward college and career, but too many others drop out or graduate ill-prepared for the 21st Century workplace and society. In light of the economic and demographic changes already in motion, the South cannot afford to write off any of its young people: The future well-being of both our economy and our democratic society is at stake.

In 2004, two interrelated questions confront our region's leaders:

- Can the South muster the will to develop public schools aligned with the demands of a fast-changing economy?

- Can the region develop schools that meet the needs of a multi-ethnic, democratic society?

Public education, civil society, and economic opportunity

In 1954, the South was not only a region divided by race, but also a region of low-wage, low-skill jobs, most of which required less than a high school education. More than a century before *Brown*, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote of the vital link between public education and a healthy democratic society. He observed, "It cannot be doubted that in the United States the instruction of the people powerfully contributes to the support of the democratic republic…"

From the earliest days of the Republic, Americans have understood that strong public education promotes a strong society. Our society and economy benefit when all people have the opportunity to develop their talents fully, and public schools are the only educational institutions with the mission to educate all children who show up at their doors. Public education supports a more vital commonweal by ensuring not only a healthy supply of smart entrepreneurs and productive workers, but also knowledgeable voters and active community members who have worked and learned with a variety of people. Strong public education is an essential asset for both individuals and communities.

Today the South has emerged as a dynamic region, growing in jobs and people, in political as well as economic prowess. To sustain and advance its economic and civic dynamism, the region needs public schools that educate all young people well. Public schools educate nearly nine out of 10 Southern children. All citizens – whether or not they have children in the public schools – have a vital stake in strong public education. Most of the people whom Southerners rely on to fix computers, fly airplanes, treat illnesses, and police the streets are products of public schools. So are most of the citizens who serve on juries, vote in elections, occupy government offices, and live next door.

If public education continues down its current path, leaving many young people by the wayside, tomorrow's South will have too few competent workers, a less-informed citizenry, and more people living in alienation, in poverty, and in prison. In the long run, the South will pay a heavy price – companies unable to find managers and workers, democratic government unable to respond to critical public needs, and a civil society divided by fear, misunderstanding, and isolation.

Our society places enormous demands on public schools – and that is as it should be. The stakes are high, in light of the challenges facing our economy, our community well-being, and democracy. It is at the schoolhouse, as Governor Winter says, that we as a society work to eliminate the "harshest fault line of all," the line that separates the poorly educated from the well-educated.

To the South: Time to act

This is the fifth *State of the South* report in a series that began in 1996. It examines economic, demographic, and educational trends and calls on the South's leaders to respond by reducing isolation and strengthening equity in public education. It focuses in particular on the importance of making public high schools more effective launching pads that propel all students toward success in college and career.

This *State of the South* highlights four crucial trends:

- The South's economy is changing rapidly. Education beyond high school is increasingly essential for individual and community prosperity and well-being.

- The South's population is changing. As baby boomers retire, a rising generation, more heavily black and Latino than the current population, is entering our schools and forming the core of our region's future workforce.

- Fifty years after *Brown*, race matters. Poverty, regardless of race, matters even more. Many low-income youth, as well as African Americans and Latinos, are not getting the education they need. Our schools can – and must – do a better job of breaking down isolation and overcoming the disadvantages that hold back low-income youth.

- High school education is changing – and it needs to. High schools don't fail only minority and low-income students – they fail to engage and inspire many middle-class and affluent students as well. The South needs its high schools to provide more vibrant options for teenagers, and it needs high schools that are better aligned with the demands of a rapidly changing economy.

In response to those trends, the South must act to reduce isolation and provide excellent education for all young people. It should reinvigorate its public high schools to enable all young Southerners to carve out pathways to successful careers and satisfying lives. In doing these things, the South will also make its communities more competitive in an economy gone global and highly technological.

While focusing on public education, this is not a report on what schools should do. It's about what the South should do. Superintendents, principals, teachers, and school boards all have important roles in responding to these trends. But the job ahead also requires participation of the South's business leaders; its universities and community colleges; its governors, legislators, and other elected officials; and engaged citizens from all walks of life.

Good schools and healthy communities go hand in hand. Public schools shape the people who will determine and the cohesiveness and well-being of our communities as well as the health of our democracy and economy. Communities, in turn, must demand more of their schools and provide support to ensure that schools hold high expectations for all students and that students receive the support they need to meet high academic standards.

II. Squeezed in a Vise: Economics and Demography

When the Supreme Court decided *Brown v. Board*, most adult Southerners did not extend their education beyond high school. Indeed, many left school before graduation and went to work. After all, most jobs on farms or in factories – driving trucks and tractors, connecting pipe, sewing seams, cropping tobacco – did not require much formal education.

Fifty years later, the economy has shifted dramatically. Hundreds of thousands of Southerners now assemble automobiles or make vehicle components in factories that pay good wages and require technical skills no one dreamed of 50 years ago. Only two out of 100 Southerners still do farmwork, while every weekday millions join congested traffic en route to glassy office buildings to trade stocks, make loans, issue reports, and sell everything from insurance to computer programs to country music CDs.

For both people and places in today's South, education is a prerequisite for success. For individuals, jobs that pay middle-class wages require a demanding high school education followed by further education and training. For communities, good public schools are central to civic vitality and economic competitiveness.

But just at a time when the South needs more of its people educated, and educated better, the region finds itself squeezed in a vise. On one side of the vise is the economy. To thrive in an increasingly competitive global economy – as a region that attracts, creates, and sustains high-paying, high skilled jobs – the South needs more workers with education and training beyond high school. On the other side is demography. As a region with historically low levels of educational attainment, the South faces two demographic challenges to boosting its education levels:

- In the near future, as the baby boom generation ages and retires, a growing share of the South's workforce will be African American and Latino – segments of the population that our schools educate least well.
- A large proportion of the incoming workforce will have grown up in poverty, with inadequate resources at home and inadequate educational opportunity at school.

To understand how education does and should function in our society, it is necessary first to place it in context. The South's future prosperity will depend on how well we prepare today's youth – including students of all races, ethnic backgrounds, and income levels – for high-skilled work, lifelong learning, social interaction, and civic participation. The region's response to the tightening vise of changing economics and demographics will determine its future.

The challenge is formidable, and in the short run it is made tougher by the state of the economy. In the past four years, the national economic downturn has cost hundreds of thousands of Southerners their jobs. Public revenue streams have shrunk, and state and

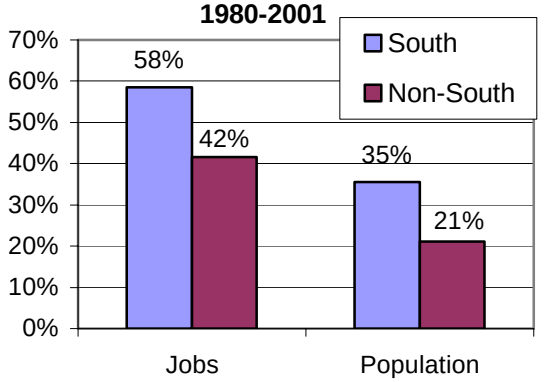
local governments have cut budgets for social services and education. The worst state fiscal crisis since the Great Depression makes it difficult for the region's leaders to reaffirm and expand the public commitment to high-quality education for all students. But that is what the South must do to achieve long-term prosperity and civic health.

Economics

Long-term progress

During the second half of the 20th Century, the South made tremendous economic progress, narrowing historic gaps with the rest of the nation. The South outpaced the nation in growth of jobs and population, especially during the last two decades. *(See Figure 2.1.)* The region's per capita income rose from 83 percent of the national level in 1970 to 90 percent in 2002.

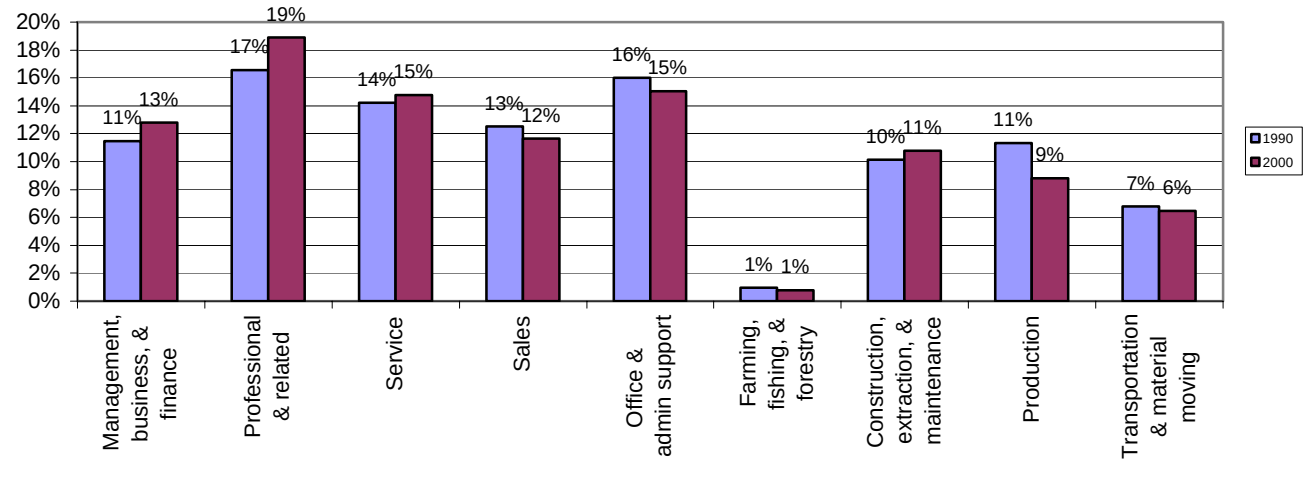
Figure 2.1 --Job and Population Growth, South and Non-South, 1980-2001



Source: BEA/REIS

The region's economy has evolved from one of agriculture and low-skilled manufacturing to a 21st Century mix of services, and more people employed in managerial occupations than in blue collar jobs. *(See Figure 2.2)*

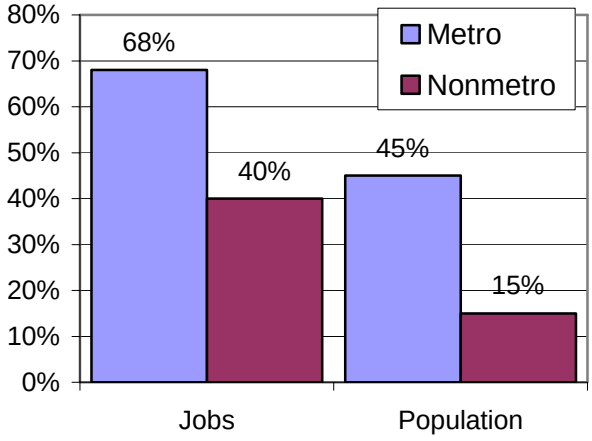
Figure 2.2 – White Collar Surge, Blue Collar Decline
Percent Employed by Occupation, South, 1990 & 2000



Source: U.S. Census

The South's growth and prosperity have been concentrated in its metropolitan areas. The region has twice as many mega-metros with population over a million today as in 1980. Yet even in thriving metropolitan areas, inner-city poverty remains high, and prosperity still eludes much of the rural South. From the tobacco and textile belts to Appalachia, the Deep South, and the Rio Grande Valley, communities struggle with the long-standing challenges of low education and high poverty while also being battered by the forces of globalization and technological change. Over the past two decades, the number of jobs grew more than twice as rapidly in the South's metro areas as in rural regions, and metro population grew nearly three times as fast as rural population. *(See Figure 2.3.)*

Figure 2.3 --Job and Population Growth, Metro and Nonmetro South 1980-2001



Source: BEA/REIS

Shocks to the system

Even as the South's economy surged over the past two decades, structural shifts undermined the farm-and-factory base of the region's rural communities and transformed metropolitan economies. The rising economic tide lifted so many boats that it was easy to ignore the structural changes at work. But when the tide ebbed at the close of the 1990s, it revealed serious weaknesses in the South's economy.

In just three years, 1998-2001, the South lost 465,000 manufacturing jobs, a 7.7 percent drop. Factory jobs declined by more than 10 percent in Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The national loss was 6.6 percent. After 2001 the hemorrhaging continued, especially in the textile-dependent states of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

The conventional wisdom goes like this: The South is exchanging its low-wage manufacturing jobs for even lower-wage service and retail jobs. Indeed, in towns and small cities with plunging employment in textiles, furniture, and other traditional manufacturing, many Southern adults have had to take fast-food or retail jobs – or no jobs at all.

But the conventional wisdom goes only so far. The forces of globalization and technology have fundamentally restructured the Southern economy, creating and destroying both high-skilled and low-skilled jobs. As the South's manufacturing employment fell by 7.7 percent between 1998-2001, total employment increased by 4.7 percent, slightly above the national gain of 4.5 percent. The growth in services, trade, and other sectors generated both high- and low-end jobs.

Education for what jobs?

It takes only a glance at the South's fastest-growing metropolitan areas to see how a rise in high-end jobs comes accompanied by a surge in low-skill employment. Affluent workers – in offices, labs, schools, hospitals, and a variety of creative pursuits – increase the demand for shopping, restaurants, and services. That spawns many lower-wage jobs, leading to wide income disparities in the region's fastest-growing new-economy centers.

National projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that the high-skill, low-skill divide will persist. Of the 30 occupations expected to generate the most jobs between 2000 and 2010, two-thirds require only a high school education – retail salespersons, cashiers, truck drivers, office clerks, and the like.

But overall, BLS projections show rising demand for workers with education beyond high school. Occupations requiring a bachelor's degree accounted for 21 percent of all jobs nationally in 2000, but they will make up 29 percent of the new jobs generated between 2000 and 2010. (*See Figure 2.4*.) BA-level occupations that are expected to generate the most new jobs nationally include computer software engineers and systems analysts, network administrators, general managers, and teachers.

Figure 2.4 -- U.S. Occupational Projections by Education Level

Education level	**Percent of all jobs, 2000**	**Percent of all projected job growth, 2000-2010**	**Projected rate of growth, 2000-2010***	**Mean earnings**
BA+	21%	29%	22%	$56,500
Postsecondary vocational award or Associate degree**	8%	13%	24%	$35,700
Work-related training	71%	58%	12%	$26,000

Source: Daniel E. Hecker, "Occupational Employment Projections to 2010," *Monthly Labor Review* 124, Number 11, November 2001.

*Total job growth during this decade is projected at 15 percent.
**Associate degrees are 2-year degrees awarded by community colleges.

Similarly, occupations requiring a community college degree or certificate represented just 8 percent of all jobs in 2000 but will comprise 13 percent of the new jobs this decade. Prominent occupations in this group include registered nurses, several types of medical technicians and assistants, and computer support specialists. Meanwhile, occupations that require only work-related training made up 71 percent of all jobs in 2000 but represent only 58 percent of projected job growth.

The South must ensure it gets its share of the nation's new high-skilled jobs by equipping its workforce for those jobs. And it must make sure that all young people have access to good jobs.

A better future: Competitiveness and equity

Today and in the future, concerns about both community competitiveness and individual opportunity lead to a single clear imperative: Ensure that all young people graduate from high school prepared for further education.

Predicting the future has never been easy. A generation ago, today's fast-growing occupations in computer-related fields hardly existed. The South was busy marketing its cheap land, low wages, and low taxes to woo assembly plants from the North and Midwest, never dreaming that in two or three decades those factories would leave the South for Mexico or China. A generation ago, who would have predicted that then mid-sized Southern cities would become national and international centers for banking, communications, technology, or entertainment?

By the time today's youth reach mid-life, advances in technology and the relentless drive toward globalization (not to mention environmental, political, or humanitarian crises) may take the economy in directions that are unforeseeable in 2004. But even if we cannot predict what tomorrow's economy will look like, we don't need a crystal ball to know what today's youth need to learn.

To retain high-wage jobs and capture new opportunities for economic development, the South needs to continue elevating the skill levels of its workforce. An ever-increasing number of jobs require education beyond high school. And jobs that pay a living wage, even if they do not require a postsecondary degree or certificate, require skills similar to those needed for success in college – strong reading comprehension, oral and written communication skills, problem-solving ability, knowing how to learn.

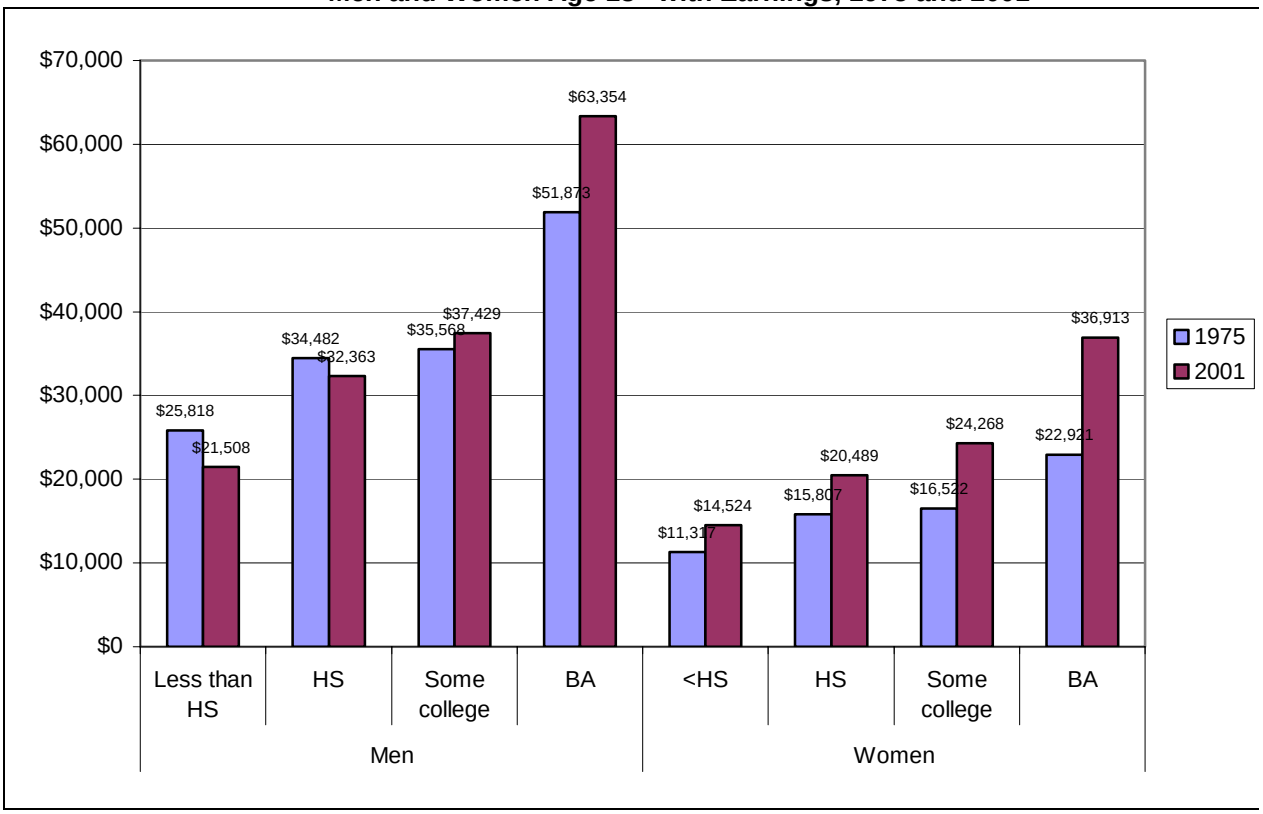
Today's high school students will shape the region's future, and they must be adaptable and entrepreneurial. They must be creative thinkers who ultimately will invent new technologies, processes, and services to fuel future economic development. They must be able to work cooperatively and harmoniously in an increasingly multi-ethnic, multi-lingual workforce and global economy.

Too many Southern youth are leaving high school without the skills needed for success in postsecondary education and the workplace. If communities continue on that track, they will find themselves less and less competitive in the national and global economy. If, on the other hand, schools and communities prepare all their young people for learning beyond high school, the next generation of Southerners will have a shot at sustaining the prosperity the region has enjoyed for the past two decades.

A concern for individual opportunity and equity also demands that all youth leave high school prepared for further learning. As the economy creates more low-wage, low-skilled jobs, our society is becoming more rigidly two-tiered. Too often, the poor and people of color get stuck in the bottom tier, bouncing from one dead-end job to another and never able to rise above poverty. Meanwhile, those from more advantaged homes and communities have ready access to good education and rewarding work. That inequity is a formula for hopelessness, disillusionment, and alienation on the part of the poor. It is also the formula for a divided society that betrays the American ideal of opportunity for all.

SIDEBAR: *Education and Earnings*

Figure 2.5 -- Earnings in the U.S. by Educational Attainment, Men and Women Age 18+ with Earnings, 1975 and 2001



Source: Postsecondary Ed Opportunity, March 2003 (based on CPS data)
Note: earnings are in constant 2001 dollars.

Education beyond high school is becoming ever more essential to earn a middle-class income. From 1975-2001, earnings for male high school graduates fell in real dollars by $2,100, or 6 percent, while earnings for men with a bachelor's degree rose by $11,500, or 22 percent. Male high school dropouts' earnings, meanwhile, plummeted 17 percent. Over the past quarter-century, both men and women college graduates saw their earnings rise much faster than workers with less education.

Demography

Demographic change is transforming the South

The South's demographic fabric has changed dramatically over the past two decades, and the current decade will bring even more change. The region's booming economy has been a magnet for new residents from other states and other countries. Overall, our population is becoming older. At the same time, our young population is becoming more heavily Latino and African American.

During the 1990s, the greatest growth in the South's population came in the 45-64 age group. That cohort grew by 5.8 million people, as the baby boom generation entered

middle age. More than two-thirds of the increase in that age group came from whites. Similarly, whites accounted for about three-fourths of the increase in Southerners 65 years and older. *(See Figure 2.6.)*

Population growth among younger adults and children paints a very different racial and ethnic picture and shows how different the region's workforce will look a decade from now. The South's young adult population (ages 20-44) increased by 3.5 million in the 1990s. Over half of the increase – 2.1 million – came from Latinos. Another million (28 percent of the increase) were African Americans. Only 370,000 (11 percent) were non-Hispanic whites or people of other races (*Figure 2.6*).

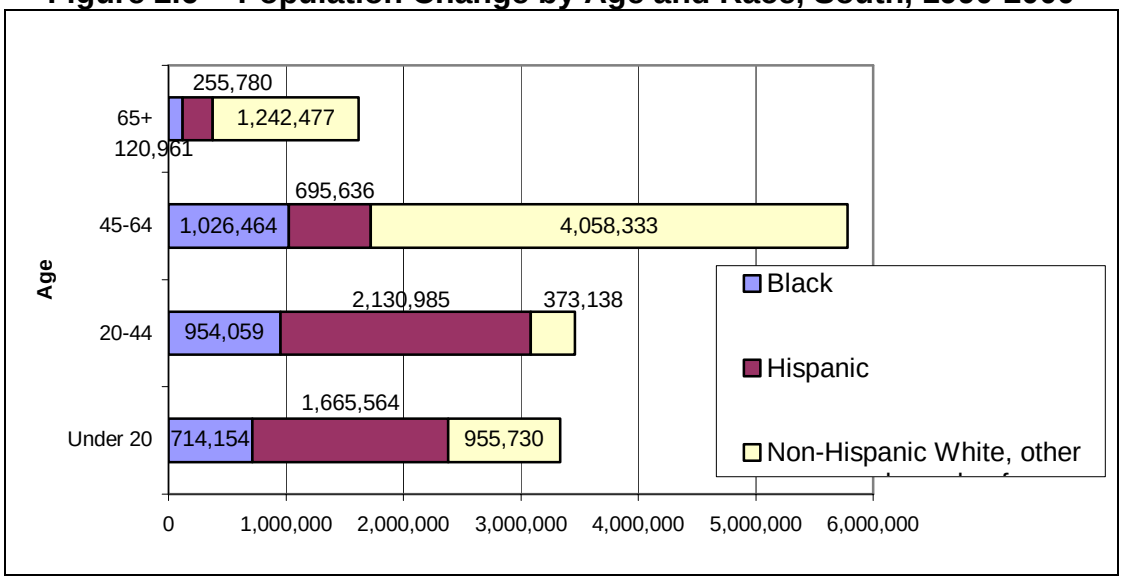
Similarly, Latinos represented nearly half of the increase in the South's children between 1990 and 2000. The population under age 20 grew by 3.3 million, including 1.6 million Latinos, just under a million non-Hispanic whites and children of other races, and 700,000 African Americans (*Figure 2.6*).

Rates of growth suggest that by 2010, both Latinos and African Americans will comprise a larger proportion of the region's young population. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of white children (plus Asians and Native Americans) increased by 7 percent, while black children increased by 14 percent and Latinos by 68 percent. Growth rates for young adults (ages 20-44) followed the same pattern.

Texas is the South's largest state and home to 59 percent of the region's Latinos. But even outside of Texas, Latinos are the South's fastest growing population among young adults and children. In the 13 Southern states excluding Texas, whites declined from 66 percent to 62 percent of all children during the 1990s, while Latinos increased from 4 percent to 8 percent and blacks remained constant at 30 percent. (*See Figure 2.7.)*

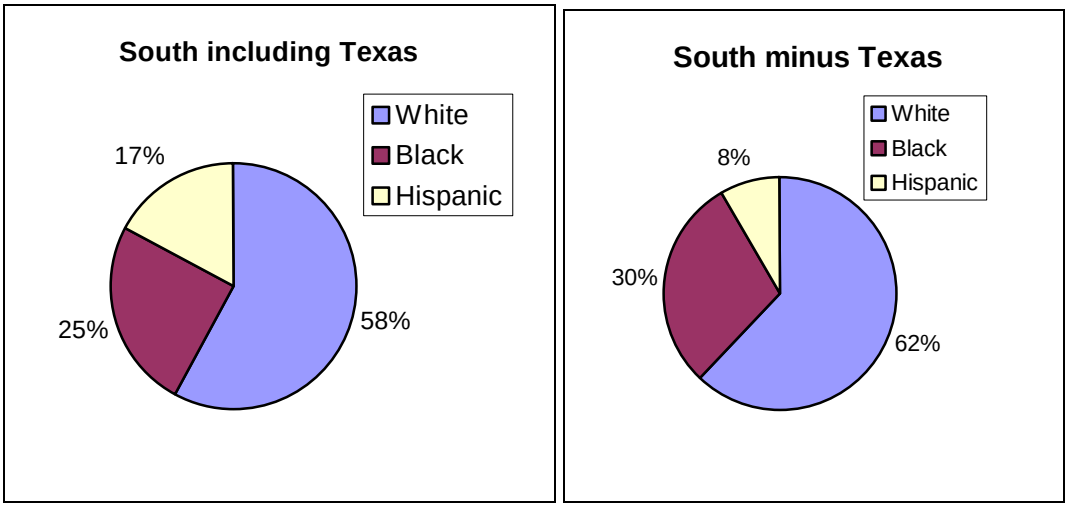
The upshot is clear: In the coming decade, more of the South's young adults and children will be black and Latino. As millions of baby boomers retire from jobs as managers, product developers, teachers, and foremen, employers will depend more on blacks and Latinos to take their places. In today's global economy, the South's increasing diversity is an asset – but only if all children are prepared to succeed in a multi-ethnic workplace and society.

Figure 2.6 -- Population Change by Age and Race, South, 1990-2000



Source: U.S. Census

Figure 2.7-- Children under age 20 by race and ethnicity in 2000



Source: U.S. Census
Note: "White" includes non-Hispanic whites and people of other races.

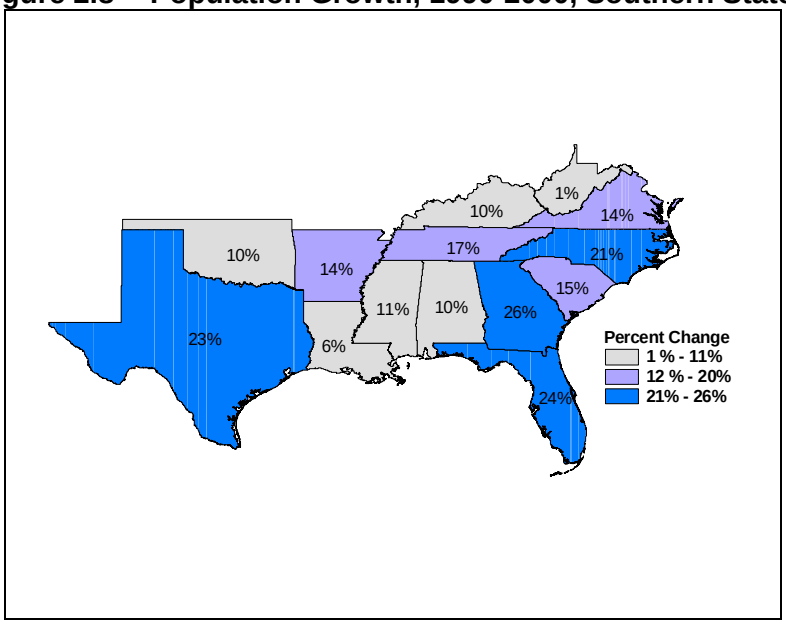
Between 1990 and 2000, most of the South's increase in adults ages 20-44 came from blacks and Hispanics. Most of the increase in children came from Hispanics. The age cohort that grew the most during the decade were adults 45-64, and most of the increase in that group came from whites.

If Texas is removed from the South, Hispanic children drop from 17% to 8% of total children, and blacks increase from 25% to 30%.

These charts use an unconventional population group, "non-Hispanic whites, other races, and people of more than one race." We created this group simply by subtracting the Census count for Hispanic and "black alone" from the total population. The resulting population group has the following composition: approximately 94.2% are non-Hispanic whites, 2.7% are Asians, 2% are people of more than one race, and 1% are Native Americans. Among children, slightly fewer are non-Hispanic whites, and slightly more are in each of the other groups.

SIDEBAR: *State Population Growth*

Figure 2.8 -- Population Growth, 1990-2000, Southern States



Source: U.S. Census

In the 1990s, as in previous decades, some Southern states boomed while others grew slowly. Texas and the Atlantic Coast states of North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida all grew by more than 20 percent during the 1990s. The region's slowest population growth occurred in West Virginia, Oklahoma, and the Deep South states of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

Figure 2.9 -- Hispanic Population Growth by State, 1990-2000

	Population Growth	Percent Change
AL	51,201	208%
AR	66,990	337%
FL	1,108,572	70%
GA	326,305	300%
KY	37,955	173%
LA	14,694	16%
MS	23,638	148%
NC	302,237	394%
OK	93,144	108%
SC	64,525	211%
TN	91,097	278%
TX	2,329,761	54%
VA	169,252	106%
WV	3,790	45%

Source: U.S. Census

The most dramatic population change across the South in the 1990s was the large increase in Latino residents. The Latino population grew by 200 percent or more in six states. The largest numerical growth outside Florida and Texas was in Georgia and North Carolina, where Latinos increased by than 300,000.

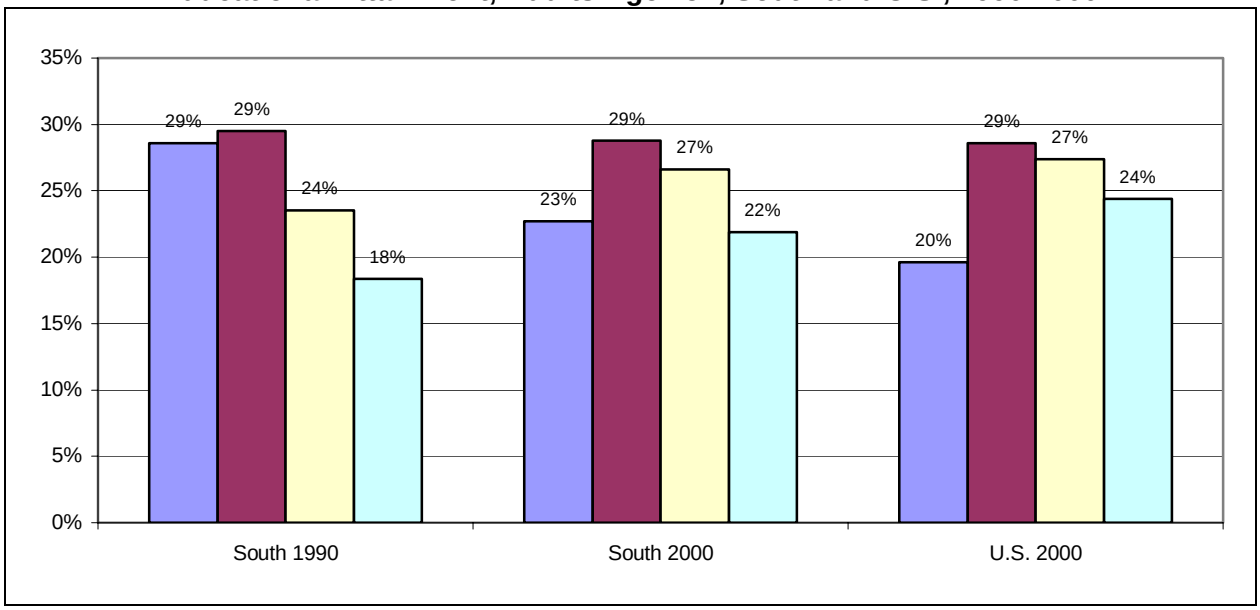
Catching up, but still undereducated

Historically, low educational attainment in the South was both a cause and a result of the region's low-skilled economy. Education was not highly valued in an economy based on sharecropping, mining, and cotton mills. States and communities invested minimally in public education to keep taxes down and to keep workers in their place. African Americans, especially in the rural South, did not have access to education beyond the sixth grade. Universities were a place for the elite.

The rural youth who finished high school and went on to college often moved away because there were few jobs in the South's small towns and rural areas for the college-educated. In 1950, only five percent of Southerners had a bachelor's degree. When farm jobs disappeared in the 1950s, the South marketed its low-cost labor and low taxes to recruit low-skilled manufacturing. The undereducated workforce was a magnet for assembly plants in the South's small towns and rural areas, but it prevented the region from attracting or developing higher-skilled jobs.

Today the South is breaking the cycle of low educational attainment and low-skilled jobs. Since 1990, the South has continued its long-term climb toward the national average in educational attainment. Seventy-seven percent of Southern adults now have a high school diploma, compared to 80 percent nationally. Twenty-two percent of Southern adults have a bachelor's degree, compared to 24 percent nationally. (*See Figure 2.10.)*

Figure 2.10 -- Better Educated, but Still Below Average
Educational Attainment, Adults Age 25+, South and U.S., 1990-2000

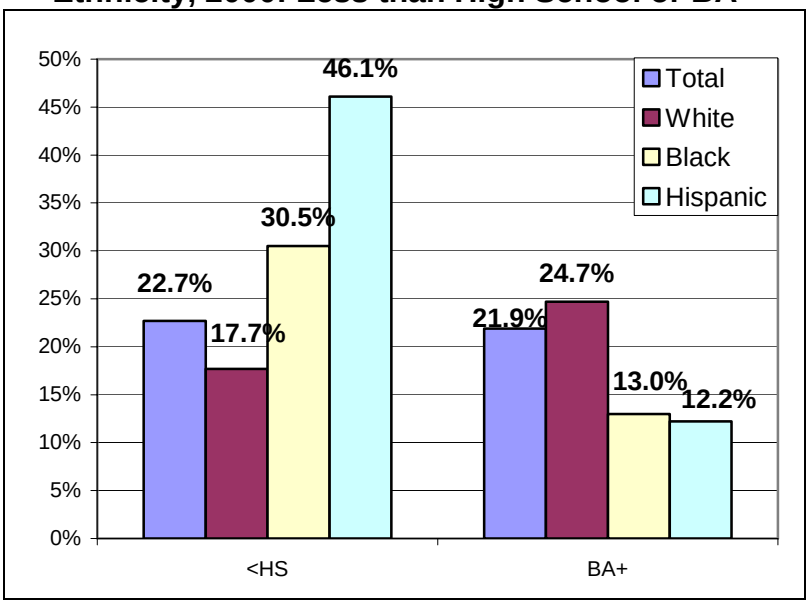


Source: U.S. Census

Since 1990, the South has continued its long-term climb toward the national average in educational attainment. By 2000, the percentage of Southern adults with at least a high school diploma had risen to 77 percent, just below the U.S. rate of 80 percent. The percentage of Southerners with a bachelor's degree had reached 22 percent, just below the U.S. rate of 24 percent.

Despite the South's progress, there remain large gaps in educational attainment among whites, blacks, and Latinos. Nearly half the South's Latinos, and 30 percent of African Americans, lack a high school diploma. Only 13 percent of black adults and 12 percent of Latinos have a bachelor's degree. In contrast, almost 25 percent of white adults in the South have a BA. (*See Figure 2.11.)* (Educational attainment of Native Americans is comparable to that of blacks, while Asians have the highest attainment of any race or ethnic group.)

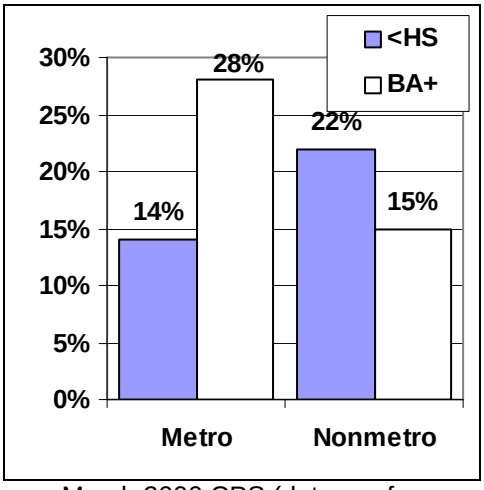
Figure 2.11 -- Southern Adults Age 25+ by Educational Attainment and Race & Ethnicity, 2000: Less than High School or BA+



Source: U.S. Census
NOTE: "White" is non-Hispanic white.
"Black" is defined by the Census category "black alone"

There is also a large gap in educational attainment between the rural and metropolitan South. In metro areas, there are twice as many workforce-age adults (ages 25-64) with a bachelor's degree as high school dropouts. In nonmetro areas, there are substantially more adults without a high school education than adults with a BA. (*See Figure 2.12.)*

Figure 2.12 — Urban/Rural Gap in Educational Attainment: Adults Age 25-64 with Less Than High School or BA+, Metro and Nonmetro South, 2000

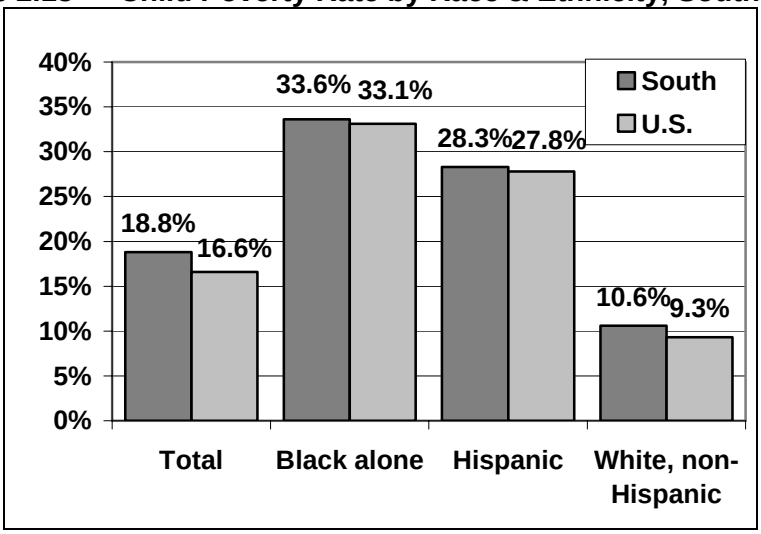


Source: March 2000 CPS (data are for the Southern Census Region)

Poverty puts children's futures at risk

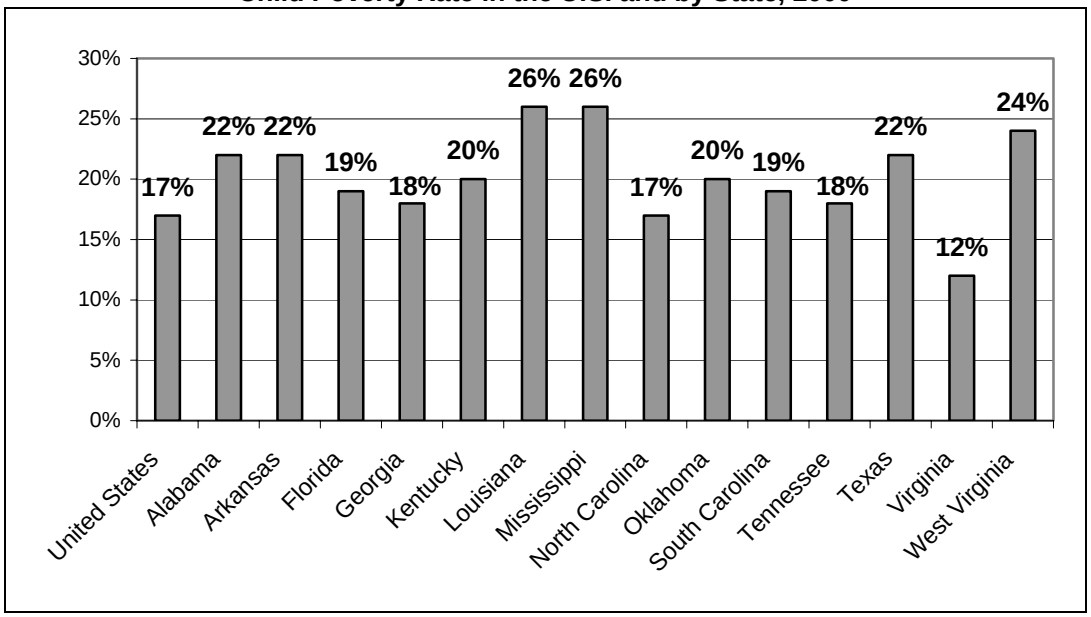
Despite its educational and economic progress, the South still has the nation's highest rate of poverty. Nearly one out of five children in the South lives in a household below the poverty level, including 34 percent of black children (2 million), 28 percent of Latinos (1.1 million), and 11 percent of white children (1.5 million). (*See Figure 2.13.)*

Figure 2.13 — Child Poverty Rate by Race & Ethnicity, South, 2000



Source: U.S. Census 2000

Figure 2.14 — The Unconscionable Truth about Child Poverty
Child Poverty Rate in the U.S. and by State, 2000



Source: Kids Count Data Book Online, 2003 (Based on U.S. Census data)

In 2000, 17 of every 100 children in the United States lived below the poverty line. In every Southern state except Virginia, the rate was even higher. Eight Southern states had child poverty rates of 20 percent or above.

In 2000, Virginia was the only Southern state with a child poverty rate below the national average, an already unconscionable 17 percent. Eight Southern states had rates of 20 percent or higher. *(See Figure 2.14.)*

For decades poverty has been concentrated in the rural South, and today the region's highest rate of child poverty is still found in small cities and towns. In the South's "urban clusters" – places with population between 2,500 and 50,000 that are outside metropolitan areas – the 2000 Census found as many as 28 percent of children living below poverty. (Nationally, the child poverty rate in urban clusters is 22 percent.) Child poverty is also extremely high in central cities: The South's central city rate is 24.5 percent, just above the national rate of 24 percent.

Sidebar: *Poverty and Academic Achievement*

The 4.5 million Southern children growing up in households below the poverty line face significant hurdles to success in school. A recent study by Paul E. Barton, *Parsing the Achievement Gap*, identified 14 factors in the home, community, and school that are linked to academic achievement and examined which factors put low-income and/or minority students at risk of failure.

Not surprisingly, several home-related factors are linked to poverty. Compared to higher-income families, low-income parents are less involved with their child's school, and they move more frequently, shifting their children from one school to another. Lead poisoning, poor nutrition, and other health factors that impede learning are closely linked to poverty. Poor children are less likely to have a family member read to them every day than higher-income youth, and they are more likely to spend long hours watching television.

Low-income and minority children also face disadvantages in the classroom that impede academic achievement. Compared to schools with middle-income, white, or racially integrated student bodies, schools with high concentrations of black, Hispanic, or low-income students have fewer well-prepared teachers, less technology in the classroom, a less rigorous high school curriculum, and larger classes.

The future of our communities and economy depends on educating all children well. The South has a large number of children in poverty, and they face barriers to learning before they ever enter school. It takes more resources, better teachers, and strong community involvement to help disadvantaged children overcome the hurdles they face in their homes and communities. But their schools typically have fewer resources, less-experienced teachers, and less community involvement than schools in more affluent communities.

And even with optimal resources, schools alone cannot overcome the hurdles facing children in poverty. Hunger, ill health, and other problems that can arise in a household or neighborhood under stress are serious barriers to learning. Our states and cities must ensure adequate health care and social services to minimize the drag that such conditions exert on poor children in school.

Disconnected youth

Children who grow up in poverty are at particular risk of becoming "disconnected youth" – teenagers and young adults with weak ties to school, work, their community, and society. Southerners should be particularly concerned, because disconnected youth are concentrated in the South.

In a report for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Michael Wald and Tia Martinez define disconnected youth as unmarried 18- to 24-year-olds with a high school diploma or less who have been unemployed for a year or longer or are incarcerated. According to that definition, 1.8 million youth – or seven percent of all 18- to-24-year-olds – are disconnected.

The South is home to 35 percent of the nation's 18- to 24-year-old population, but it accounts for 47 percent of the nation's disconnected young men, 42 percent of all disconnected women, and 61 percent of disconnected African American males. More disconnected youth live in the South than the Northeast and West combined.

Disconnected youth face multiple barriers to education and work. Nearly four in 10 disconnected young men are incarcerated, and the same percent of disconnected young women are raising a child, many as single mothers.

The young adults with the greatest risk of being excluded from the labor market are those whose disconnection begins before they complete high school. Wald and Martinez identified four risk factors that predict which 14- to 17-year-olds will become disconnected when they reach age 18-24: dropping out of high school, involvement in the juvenile justice system, becoming teen mothers, and living in foster care as adolescents.

The South's high schools are the last chance for adolescents to get the social and educational supports that can prevent disconnectedness. It is imperative that the South equip its high schools and its communities to connect these youth to viable pathways to further education and the workforce.

III. Two Pathways, and a Muddled Middle: Education

The region's economy and changing demographics make clear demands: every young person must be prepared for education beyond high school and for social and civic participation. Families, communities, and educators at all levels from preschool through primary and secondary school share responsibility for achieving that goal. But, as students' last compulsory engagement with public education, high schools bear special responsibility. The South's high schools are not meeting the challenge.

Instead of propelling every student toward success, the typical high school sorts them (or passively allows them to sort themselves) into winners and losers, with a large group left floundering in the middle. Our high schools are like pinball machines with students as the balls that ricochet off bumpers and flippers, some ringing up points, others heading straight to the bottom and out.

Some students roll through the entry chute at just the right tempo, dart nimbly from one class to another, pick up additional points by hitting advanced courses and extracurricular activities, and finish in four years with a high score.

Others maneuver with just enough agility to hit a few bumpers and get a passing score, but they bounce around the playfield in a hit-or-miss fashion. They may graduate but are not well prepared for work or further education.

Still others lose decidedly, falling quickly out of the game. Whether they drop out, are suspended or expelled, they end up with limited opportunities for further education or work. Some end up as young single parents trying to raise a child on meager wages. An increasing number land in prison.

There are two clear pathways out of high school. One leads to further education and career. One leads to disconnection from society and opportunity, and – for the most unfortunate – to prison. Between these two pathways is a muddled middle, filled with young people for whom high school fails to provide direction or motivation.

Students are not distributed randomly across these three trajectories. A chance for success in the pinball machine is closely linked to family and community background, income, and race, among other factors. If you come from a middle class home and attend a school with a concentration of middle- and upper-income students, you will probably graduate from high school and go on to college.

If you come from a poor or ethnic-minority family – especially if you attend a school with a high concentration of low-income students – you are less likely to be on a trajectory toward college or career.

Some young people manage to beat the odds. Some students from disadvantaged homes and communities have the motivation, perseverance, and personal abilities, coupled with support from family, teachers, or other adults, to succeed in high school and move successfully to college and career. And there are high schools throughout the South – in inner-city, rural, and suburban settings – that break the pattern, propelling low-income and minority students to high achievement. But success for disadvantaged students should not require beating the odds.

Our high schools are shortchanging a large slice of the student population. *Brown* sought to change the odds for black students by ruling an end to under-resourced, segregated schools. It aimed to give students an equal shot at getting a high-quality education. Today we need to intervene again to change the odds for all poor and minority students, as well as those who flounder through high school and graduate ill-prepared for adult life, regardless of their race and income levels. High schools must give all students the propulsion they need to move on successfully to college and work.

The South needs more young people on the pathway to higher education and fewer on the pathway to disconnectedness and prison. And it needs to carve out new paths to success for young people through high schools that serve their needs, and their communities, in the 21st Century.

Starting out against the odds

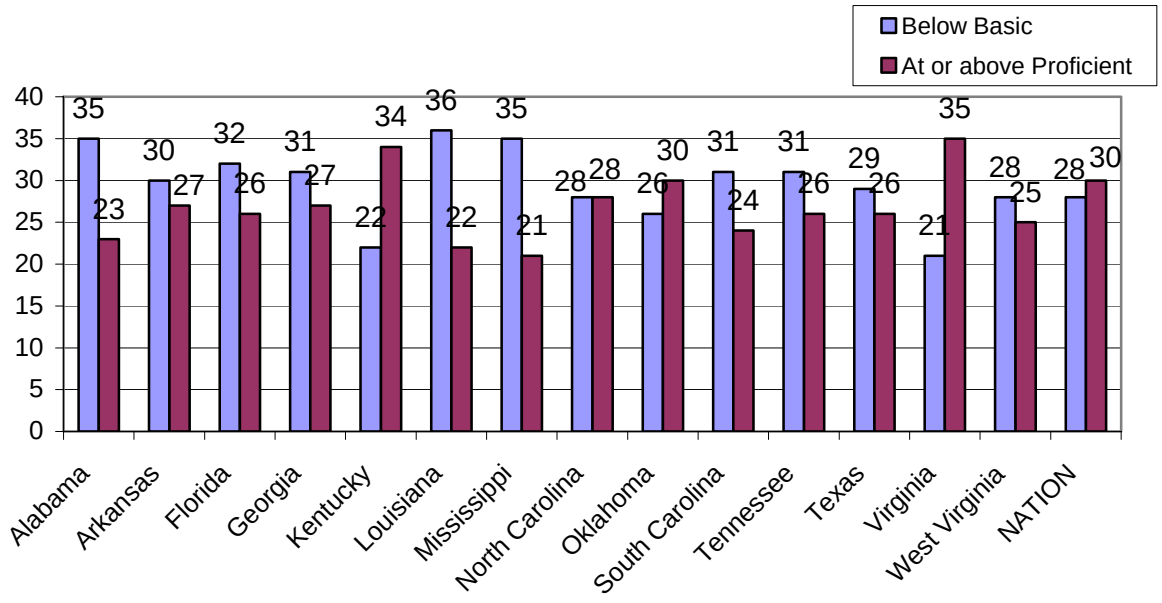
Many students enter high school with one or two strikes against them. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – the test used to compare student proficiency across states – shows that most students begin ninth grade with inadequate skills. This is true despite gains in NAEP scores in several Southern states during the 1990s.

Academic deficiency is not just a Southern problem: Nationwide, in 2003 only 30 percent of eighth-graders scored "proficient" or above in reading. Two Southern states – Virginia and Kentucky – exceeded the national rate of reading proficiency, while Oklahoma and North Carolina roughly matched the U.S. average. But in most Southern states, less than 30 percent of students scored proficient. And in 10 Southern states, more eighth-graders scored "below basic" than proficient. *(See Figure 3.1.)*

Scores for black and Hispanic students are even more troubling. Across the country, only one in eight black students and one in seven Hispanic students scored proficient or higher on the eighth grade reading test. Several Southern states were at or above the national average for African Americans, but even in the highest-scoring Southern states, no more than 15 percent of black students scored proficient in reading. Hispanic students fared somewhat better in the Southern states for which data is available. *(See Figure 3.2.)*

Starting High School Already Behind

Figure 3.1 — Percentage of 8th Grade Students Below Basic and at or Above Proficient, NAEP Reading, 2003



Source: NCES Reading Highlights 2003

Figure 3.2 —NAEP 8th Grade Reading Scores by Race/Ethnicity: Percentage who Scored Proficient or Higher, 2003

(Percents in white on black are at or above the U.S. average)

State	All Students	White	Black	Hispanic
AL	22%	30%	9%	--
AR	27%	33%	6%	***25%***
FL	27%	37%	11%	***19%***
GA	26%	36%	***12%***	***16%***
KY	***34%***	36%	***14%***	--
LA	22%	33%	9%	--
MS	21%	32%	9%	--
NC	29%	38%	***13%***	***15%***
OK	***30%***	34%	***13%***	***17%***
SC	24%	35%	10%	--
TN	26%	32%	9%	--
TX	26%	***39%***	***14%***	***14%***
VA	***36%***	***44%***	***15%***	***31%***
WV	25%	25%	***13%***	--
U.S.	**30%**	**39%**	**12%**	**14%**

Source: NCES Reading Highlights 2003

In 2003, only 30 percent of eighth-graders nationally scored proficient or higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test. (A score of proficient indicates "demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter.") In most Southern states, fewer than 30 percent of eighth-graders scored proficient; among black and Hispanic students, the percentages were even lower. In most Southern states, more students scored below basic than proficient, indicating they lacked even "partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills."

Reading is a critical indicator of preparation for success in high school. The NAEP defines proficiency as "demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter." A score of basic indicates "partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills." Eighth-graders who score below basic, then, lack even partial mastery of the skills they need to succeed in high school. In all but two Southern states (Virginia and Kentucky), more than one in four students fall into that academically at-risk group.

Math scores are even lower. Nationally, only one in four eighth-graders scored proficient or higher in math. In the South, with the exceptions of North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, math scores are even worse than the national average: More than one-third of eighth-graders scored below basic.

These test scores suggest that high school teachers face a double-pronged challenge. Not only must they move more students ahead on the pathway to success, they must help many to catch up.

Rising standards?

A few decades ago, catching up was less essential for students who entered high school with mediocre academic skills. They could take a general or vocational program, get a diploma, and find a blue-collar job that was relatively secure, if low-wage.

Today that kind of high school education doesn't cut it in the labor market. High school graduates must be ready to handle more advanced learning whether they go directly to postsecondary education or enter the job market.

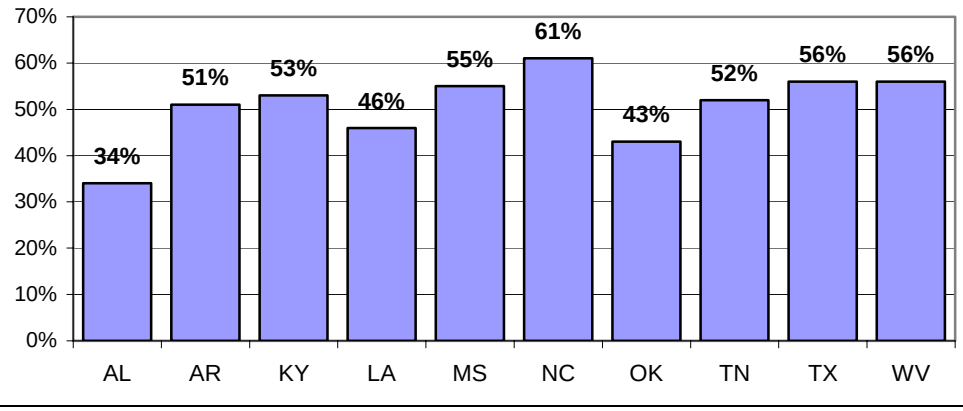
The curriculum a student takes in high school matters. The quality and intensity of the high school curriculum are powerful predictors of success in college. Preparedness for postsecondary education depends on the specific courses taken, the rigor of the curriculum, the quality of instruction, and the effort the student puts into his or her schoolwork. On most of those measures, it is hard for policymakers, parents, community members, or students themselves to know how well their schools are preparing graduates for success after high school.

Data are available, however, on the number of students taking certain upper-level courses and the number who take a recommended array of courses. On those measures, the South compares favorably with the rest of the country. For example, the national median for the percentage of high school students taking at least one upper-level math course is 47 percent. In seven of the 10 Southern states for which data are available, over half the high school students take upper-level math. (*See Figure 3.3*.)

In addition, the South leads the nation in the percent of young people taking a recommended college-prep array of courses. Two decades ago, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) recommended a core "new basics" curriculum for all high school graduates, including four years of English and three years each of math, science, and social studies. The South embraced that recommendation. By 2001, 13 Southern states (all but Texas) had adopted the new basics as their graduation standard, along with only seven non-Southern states. The South's effort has paid off. By 2000, 71

percent of Southern high school graduates took at least the core new basics, compared to just 57 percent nationally. (*See Figure 3.4.)*

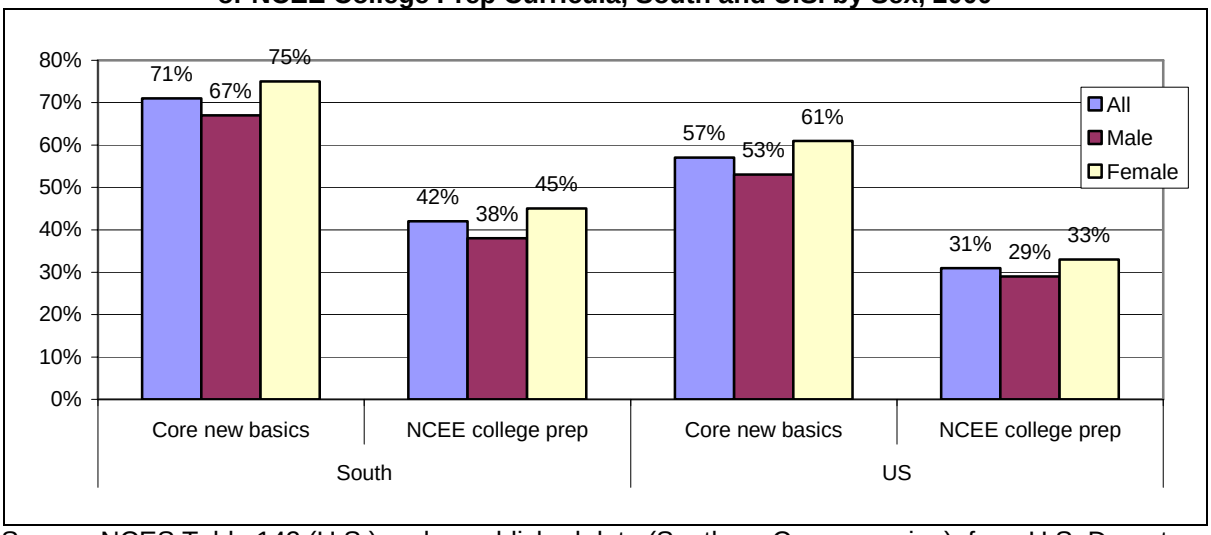
Figure 3.3 — Who Has a Shot at College?
Percent of High School Students Taking at Least One Upper-Level Math Course (Algebra II or Above), 1999-2000



Source: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, Measuring Up 2002

Successful completion of Algebra II in high school is considered by some to be the best predictor of success in college. The national median percentage of students taking upper-level math in 1999-2001 was 47 percent. Seven of the 10 Southern states for which data are available surpass the national median, with over half their high school students taking advanced math. North Carolina ranks first in the country in the percent of students taking upper-level math, at 61 percent.

Figure 3.4 – Southern Students Ahead on the Basics
High School Graduates Who Took the Core New Basics or NCEE College Prep Curricula, South and U.S. by Sex, 2000



Source: NCES Table 142 (U.S.) and unpublished data (Southern Census region), from U.S. Department of Education's High School Transcript Study

The "core new basics" curriculum includes four years of English and three years each of math, social studies, and science. The "NCEE college prep curriculum," currently recommended for college-bound students by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, includes the core new basics plus two years of a foreign language and one semester of computer science.

Today, the NCEE advises that the core new basics course of study is no longer sufficient. It recommends that college-bound students also take, at a minimum, two years of a foreign language and a semester of computer science. Again, the South is ahead of the nation, with 42 percent of its high school graduates meeting the current NCEE standard, compared to only 31 percent in the U.S. It is worth noting that in the South and the nation, young women are enrolling in college preparatory courses at higher rates than young men. In 2000, 45 percent of Southern girls took NCEE's recommended curriculum, compared to 38 percent of boys. *(Figure 3.4.)*

SIDEBAR: *Exit Exams*

It's not just what courses you take in high school that matters – it's what you actually learn. That is part of the rationale for linking the high school diploma to an exit exam: A diploma should signify more than just years of attendance; it should certify that the graduate has certain knowledge and skills.

Exit exams are prevalent in the South. By 2002-03, 10 of the 19 states with mandatory exit exams were in the South. They included all the Southern states except Arkansas, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and West Virginia.

Exit exams can be a tool to make high schools accountable to states, and they can motivate schools to align their curricula with state standards. They can encourage schools to raise all students' performance to a prescribed level of skills and knowledge so all will graduate. However, with a few exceptions (notably, Virginia), exit exams in the Southern states do not measure graduates' readiness for either work or postsecondary schooling. Competency levels are set low to ensure that most students will pass.

Exit exams would be more meaningful for schools, students, and the public if they actually measured students' preparation for postsecondary education, the military, and the workplace – if, for example, a particular score showed that a graduate had the reading and writing skills needed to succeed in college English without remediation.

The higher the standards for graduation, the more imperative it is that schools have the capacity and incentive to help students master challenging material. When states require exit exams, they should hold schools, not just students, accountable for student success.

The muddled middle

Despite the higher requirements of today's college prep and tech prep courses of study, many high school students still go along just enough to get along. They show up for school most of the time and move from class to class but without much understanding of the connection between their education and future quality of life.

Southern leaders should be concerned about the large number of students in the "muddled middle" who slip through high school with little direction or engagement and graduate ill-prepared for work or postsecondary education.

Almost all students muddle through high school to some extent. To make it through the muddle, young people need stronger connections. They need meaningful relationships with adults in their school and community. They need connections to college, work, and community service, which can give their high school experience more

relevance. They need a more personalized school environment that respects their abilities, encourages their interests, conveys high expectations, and challenges and supports them. In addition, more students than we currently recognize would flourish in high schools that integrate opportunities for real work with academic learning.

Even harder to muddle through

For some young people, the muddle is worse than for others. Especially challenged are students who enter high school several years behind in reading and math, and those who are disengaged from their schools. They need extra help, yet they are the ones who most lack access to academic or social supports.

Many such students are low-income African Americans and Latinos – the very populations on whom the region's workforce will depend increasingly in the future. Southern leaders cannot afford to let them fail.

Many students of color enter high school with inadequate academic skills, and they do not catch up. The Education Trust reports that in 1999, the average reading and math skills of black and Latino twelfth-graders nationwide were comparable to the skills of white eighth-graders.

Hilary Pennington of Jobs for the Future speaks of the simultaneous need for remediation and acceleration. Students who enter high school two or more years behind need intensive help so they can take and succeed in college prep courses. At the same time, students who are ready for more advanced academics need opportunities to tackle college-level courses while in high school. African American, Latino, and other low-income students are not getting enough at either end of the spectrum.

SIDEBAR: *Remediation and Acceleration*

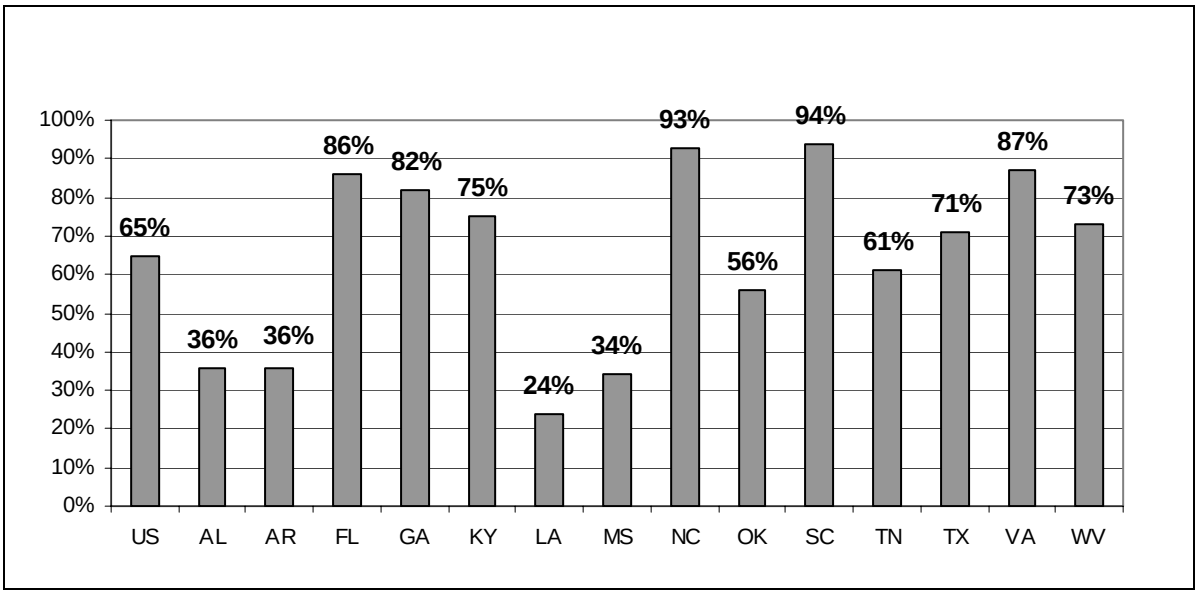
Remediation is a huge challenge for high schools. A recent report from the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University estimates that at least 25 percent of incoming ninth-graders need extra help to handle challenging high school work, and in high-poverty schools the percent is even higher. It warns that "even skilled teachers will need … to learn the skills and approaches needed to teach catch-up reading and mathematics courses."

Acceleration is something the Southern states do fairly well, but disadvantaged students are often left out. High schools offer acceleration through dual enrollment programs with community colleges, International Baccalaureate programs, and Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

Several Southern states offer AP courses widely across schools and communities. While only a small number of students take advantage of AP courses, they are available at more than 90 percent of public high schools in North Carolina and South Carolina and more than 80 percent of the high schools in Florida, Georgia, and Virginia. The national rate is 65 percent. (*See Figure 3.5.)*

Despite offering AP courses in a large number of schools, the South does no better than other regions in ensuring that minority students have access to these courses. In 2002, more than 500,000 white students in the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states took at least one AP exam, along with 88,000 Hispanics and 41,000 African Americans. If minority students participated at the same rate as whites (relative to their enrollment in school), 320,000 black and Hispanic students would have taken AP exams in the South.

Figure 3.5 — Percent of Public High Schools Offering at Least One AP Course, Southern States, 2002

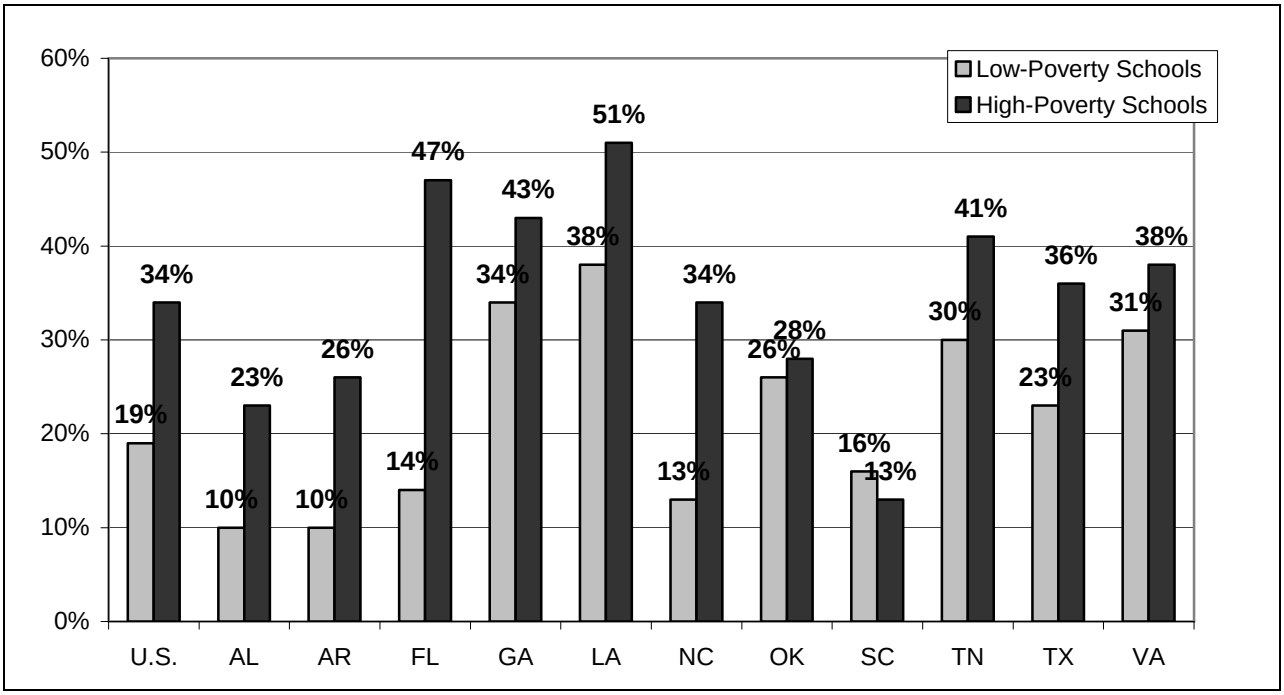


Source: SREB

For many low-income students the challenge is made harder because their schools have inadequate resources. Schools serving high-poverty communities often lack computers, lab facilities, and advanced course offerings. Many also have a concentration of inexperienced and/or poorly qualified teachers, capable of providing neither remediation nor acceleration.

Nationally, 34 percent of classes in high-poverty high schools have teachers who lack a major or minor in the field – teachers the Education Trust refers to as "mismatched." Four Southern states – Alabama, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and South Carolina – beat the national average. But in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee, more than 40 percent of the classes at high-poverty high schools have mismatched teachers. (*See Figure 3.6.)*

Figure 3.6 — The Benefits of Privilege
High School Classes Taught by Teachers Lacking Major or Minor in their Field: Low-Poverty vs. High-Poverty Schools



Source: Ed Trust/Ed Watch

"High-poverty schools" are those where more than half the students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. "Low-poverty schools" have less than 15 percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Nationally, 34 percent of classes in high-poverty high schools have teachers who lack a major or minor in their field – teachers the Education Trust refers to as "mismatched." Four Southern states – Alabama, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and South Carolina – beat the national average. But in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee, more than 40 percent of the classes at high-poverty high schools have mismatched teachers.

There are many reasons high-poverty schools get stuck with mismatched teachers. Teachers are in short supply, and resource-poor districts pay lower salaries. High-poverty schools are challenging environments to work in, so they must scramble for staff after more desirable schools have taken first choice. High-poverty rural and inner-city schools are geographically isolated from the communities where most teachers live. High-poverty communities are seldom organized or militant enough to insist on well-qualified teachers. But states and school districts must ensure that the most challenged students have highly qualified teachers.

In under-resourced schools, even the best teachers struggle to provide excellent education. They must cope with overcrowded classrooms; lack of equipment, supplies, and books; concerns about school safety; and, often, ineffective administrators.

SIDEBAR: *Black Males in Georgia*

In 2002, the University System of Georgia launched an initiative to examine why so few African American males were enrolling in college and to develop strategies for raising their college-going rate. The task force found that factors leading to low college enrollment begin in the early grades, where a disproportionate number of black males are tracked for behavioral issues into special education and other conduits that lower their aspirations. By high school, black males have substantially lower educational outcomes than other groups. Less than half of black male high school graduates in 2001 received a college prep diploma. One in three earned a career tech/vocational diploma, while nearly one in five received either a special ed diploma or "certificate of performance."

Figure 3.7 — Diplomas Awarded to Georgia's High School Graduates by Race and Sex, 2001

	College Prep	Career Tech/ Vocational	Special ed	Certificate of performance (not a HS diploma)
Black males	48%	32%	9%	10%
Black females	59%	23%	4%	13%
White males	65%	29%	<3%	<3%
White females	76%	19%	<3%	<3%

Source: "Report of the Research and Policy Analysis Subcommittee," University System of Georgia's Task Force on Enhancing Access for African-American Males, p. 10 (Chart 4).

The task force further noted that those figures understate the severity of the problem because they only count high school graduates. Four of every 10 black males who entered Georgia high schools in 1997 dropped out. Of all the entering ninth-graders, then, only 28 percent received a college prep diploma four years later.

It is important for all states and communities to examine the outcomes for their high school students, as Georgia did, and then to act to raise graduation rates and college preparation rates for students who are left behind.

All of the above factors – lagging reading and math skills, inadequate access to remediation and advanced courses, under-resourced schools, and mismatched teachers – impede low-income and minority students in advancing toward college. In addition, there are other, more subtle forces at play in their schools and communities.

Many African American, Latino, and other low-income students do not envision a future that includes college. They have few role models for academic achievement and postsecondary education in their families and communities. Their teachers and counselors often reinforce low expectations and do not encourage these students to take college prep courses.

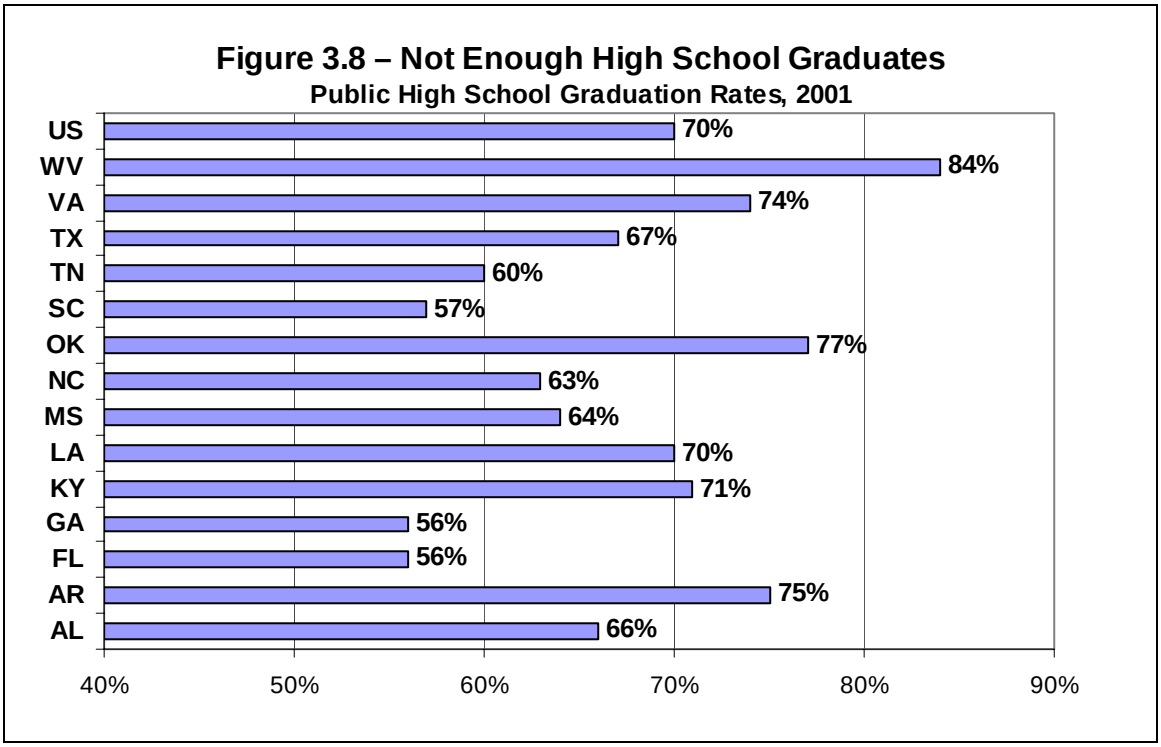
The University System of Georgia addressed factors like those head-on through its African American Male Initiative, which explored ways to raise college-going rates for black males. Several of the Initiative's recommendations focus on the cultural factors that steer many black males away from college. Recommended strategies include: improving guidance counselors' skills in guiding African American males toward college; encouraging black parents to become "significant partners" with their sons to ensure they receive good academic guidance; using summer programs and mentoring to introduce disadvantaged students to college opportunities; and increasing the number of high-quality teachers – including more black male teachers – in high-poverty, high-minority urban and rural schools.

Too few are graduating

No one really knows exactly how many students drop out of high school, but we know that far too many – especially African Americans and Latinos – are not graduating.

States, federal agencies, and researchers use many different methods to determine high school graduation and dropout rates, yielding wildly different numbers. The Urban Institute has reported that to meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, the 14 Southern states plan to use nine different methods to calculate graduation rates. Depending on which method is used, estimates of a state's graduation rate can vary by as much as 29 percentage points, making it difficult to have confidence in a state's assessment of how well its high schools are serving students and communities.

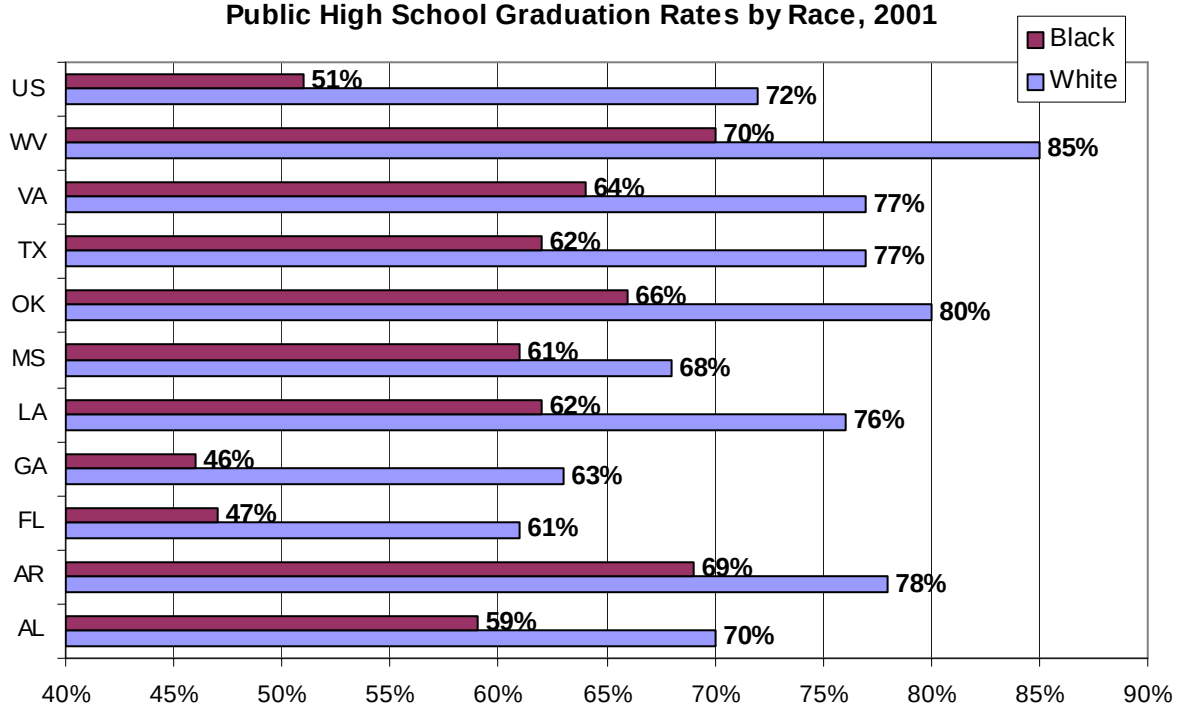
Jay Greene of the Manhattan Institute developed the graduation rate estimates that are currently favored by many education policy groups. These figures are based on the percent of students enrolled in ninth grade who graduate with a full diploma four years later, taking into account population changes that affect enrollment. Using this method, the U.S. graduation rate for 2001 was 70 percent. In other words, of every 10 ninth-graders, seven graduate four years later with a full high school diploma. Six Southern states are at or above the U.S. rate, while three – Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina – have graduation rates below 60 percent. (*See Figure 3.8.)*



Source: Jay P. Greene and Greg Forster, "Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the U.S., Education Working Paper No. 3," Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute, September 2003.

Graduation rates for African Americans and Hispanics are even lower. Of all U.S. black and Hispanic students who were ninth-graders in 1997-98, only half graduated four years later. The Southern states have rates somewhat better than the national average but still far too low. *(See Figure 3.9.)*

Figure 3.9 -- No Longer Separate, but Still Inequitable
Public High School Graduation Rates by Race, 2001



Source: Greene and Forster, September 2003.
Note: Data not available for KY, NC, SC, or TN.

These graduation rates are based on the percent of students enrolled in ninth grade who graduated with a full diploma four years later, taking into account population changes that affect enrollment. For every 10 students in the U.S. who enrolled in ninth grade in 1997-98, seven graduated four years later with a full high school diploma. Six Southern states are at or above the U.S. rate, while three – Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina – have graduation rates below 60 percent. Graduation rates for African Americans and Hispanics are considerably lower.

High school graduation matters. Dropouts are more likely to be unemployed, to live in poverty, to be disconnected from society, and to land in prison. Schools (and states) need to know who is failing to graduate, and they need to offer alternative routes that reconnect those youth to school and work.

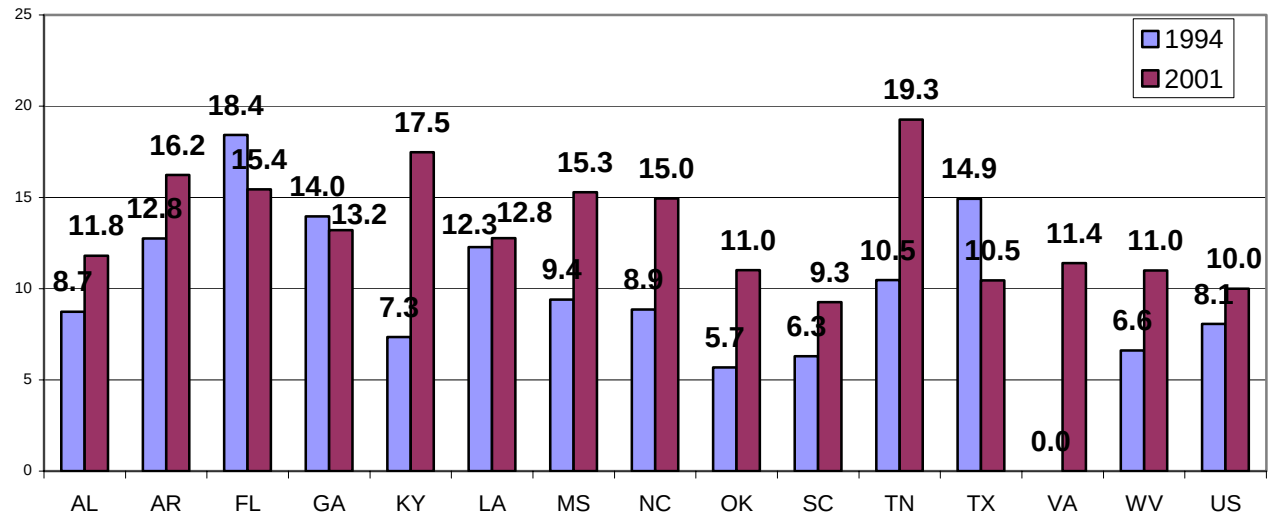
Second-chance options

For students who lose at the pinball game, or choose not to play, our society offers one dominant second-chance option: high school equivalency certification through the GED.

Young people in the South seem to take the GED route more frequently than youth in other parts of the country. Nationally in 2001, 10 teenagers (ages 16-19) earned a GED for every 100 who earned a high school diploma. All but two Southern states had rates above the U.S. average, with rates as high as 19 GEDs per 100 diplomas in Tennessee and 17 per 100 in Kentucky. Furthermore, the number of teenagers earning a GED in relation to those receiving a high school diploma rose in most Southern states during the 1990s. *(See Figure 3.10.)*

Figure 3.10 – The GED: Pathway to Where?

GEDs Issued to 16-19 Year Olds per 100 High School Diplomas, 1994 and 2001



Sources: GED data from American Council on Education, "Who Took the GED," 1994 and 2001 Statistical Reports, Table 4. High school diploma data from NCES Digest of Education Statistics
Note: Data not available on the number of 16- to 19-year-olds receiving the GED in Virginia in 1994.

The GED is more prevalent among youth in the South than in other parts of the country. Nationally in 2001, 10 teenagers ages 16-19 earned a GED for every 100 who earned a high school diploma. All but two Southern states had rates above the U.S. average, with rates as high as 19 GEDs per 100 diplomas in Tennessee and 17 per 100 in Kentucky. Furthermore, the number of teenagers earning a GED in relation to those receiving a high school diploma rose in most Southern states during the 1990s.

The GED is an invaluable option for young people and adults who missed the opportunity to graduate from high school, but it is worrisome to see it being used by so many young people as an alternative to a high school diploma. It is a poor substitute. In the labor market, people with a GED do better than high school dropouts in both employment and earnings. But compared to high school graduates, they are less likely to be employed, and when they work, they earn less.

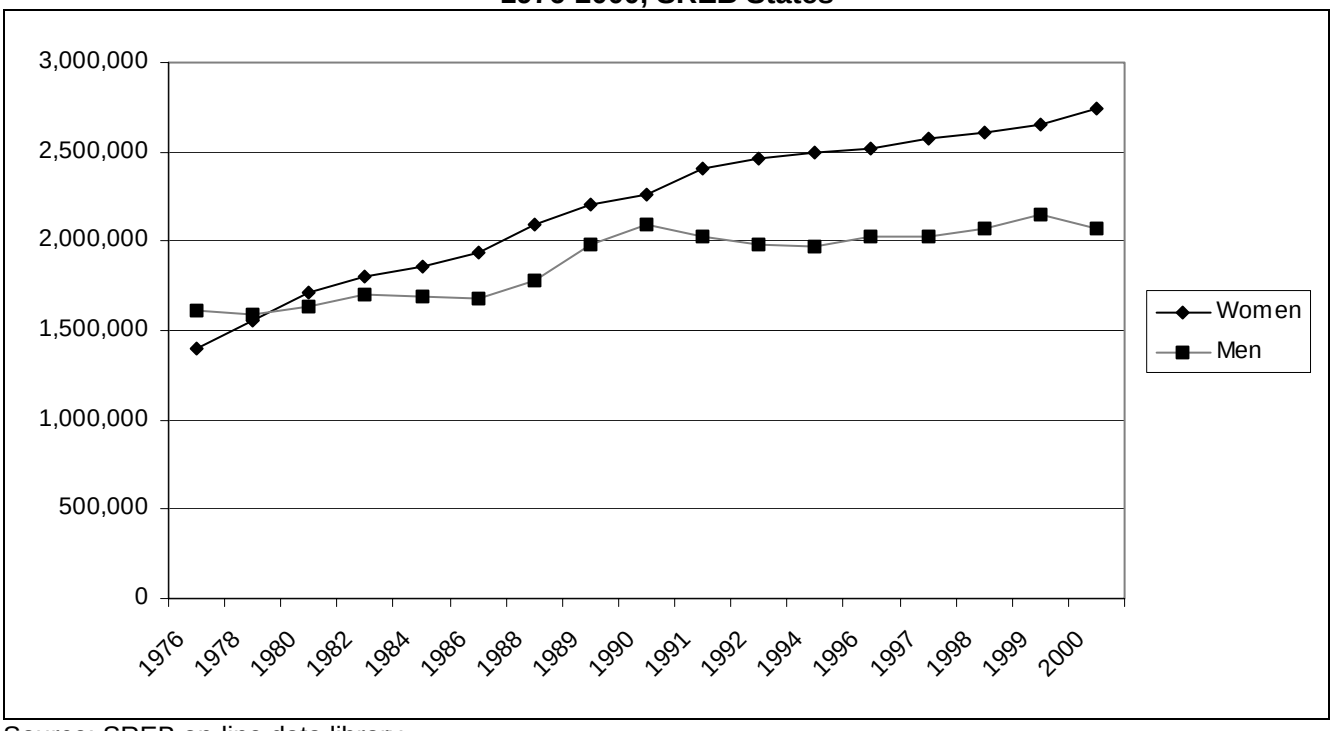
Our educational system needs to create better second-chance options for dropouts and more diverse options within high schools so more students can earn a credential that carries high value.

From high school to college

For the South, producing more postsecondary graduates – including people with two- and four-year college degrees and technical certificates – is essential to sustaining a competitive economy. The region is meeting that imperative better than in the past. But in the South, as nationally, serious inequities persist in who goes to college and who graduates.

Over the past two decades, college enrollment in the South rose substantially for women while remaining fairly constant for men. (The same trend is evident across the U.S.) As the economy shed traditional, muscle-exertion jobs and added jobs requiring technical knowledge and communication and problem-solving skills, women more than men adapted by seeking education beyond high school. By 2000, 2.7 million women and 2 million men were attending college in the South. (*See Figure 3.11*.)

Figure 3.11 -- Number Enrolled in Postsecondary Education by Sex, 1976-2000, SREB States



Source: SREB on-line data library
[Data points: 1976 – male: 1.6 million; 2000 – male: 2.1 million. 1976 – female: 1.4 million; 2000 – female: 2.7 million]

During the 1990s, black and Hispanic college enrollment increased markedly in the South. From 1990 to 2000, black enrollment rose 48 percent, while Hispanic enrollment increased by 70 percent. White enrollment declined slightly during the

decade. *(See Figure 3.12.)* While the same trend was evident nationwide, minority enrollment rose even faster in the South than in the rest of the country.

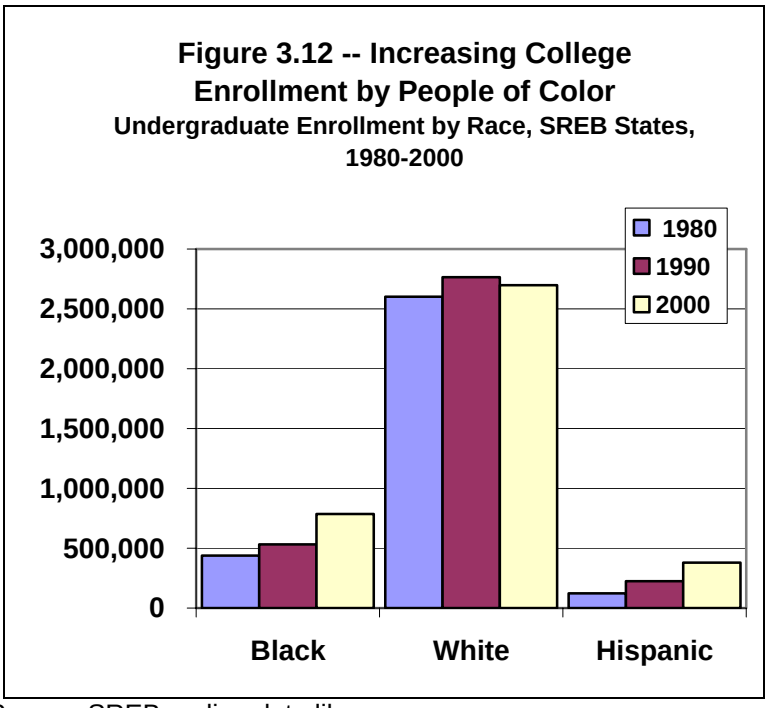


Figure 3.12 -- Increasing College Enrollment by People of Color
Undergraduate Enrollment by Race, SREB States, 1980-2000

Source: SREB on-line data library

During the 1990s, black and Hispanic college enrollment increased markedly in the South. From 1990 to 2000, black enrollment rose 48 percent, to 785,000. Hispanic enrollment increased by 70 percent, to reach 380,000. White enrollment declined slightly, ending the decade at 2.7 million. While the same trend was evident nationwide, minority enrollment rose even faster in the South than in the rest of the country.

But still, too few low-income and minority youth are going to college. Regardless of one's race, sex, or family background, postsecondary education is the surest route to a middle-class income. The young people who need the most support to follow that route – those from low-income homes and high-poverty communities – face high odds against earning a college degree.

When students pass the first milestone – graduating from high school – their chance of going on to further education depends on several factors: academic preparation; aspirations and motivation; knowledge of postsecondary options; and the affordability of college.

Those factors are closely linked to parents' educational level. U.S. data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that if you graduate from high school and one of your parents has a bachelor's degree, your chance for going directly to college is 82 percent. If your parents did not complete high school, your chance is 36 percent. *(See Figure 3.13.*)

Similarly, a high school graduate's chance for college is linked to family income. As reported by *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, between 1997 and 2000, high school graduates from families with income above $75,000 had an 86 percent chance of attending college by age

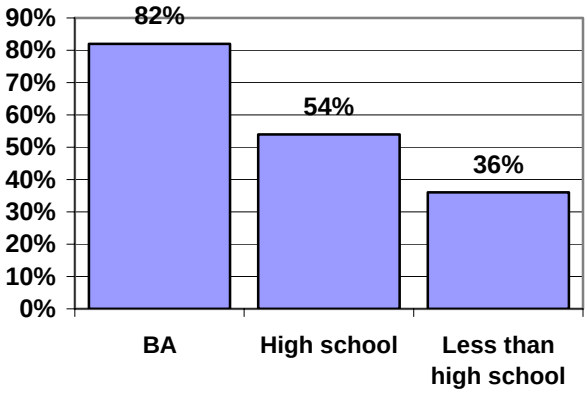


Figure 3.13 -- Inheriting a Chance at Higher Education
Chance of Going Directly to College After High School Graduation

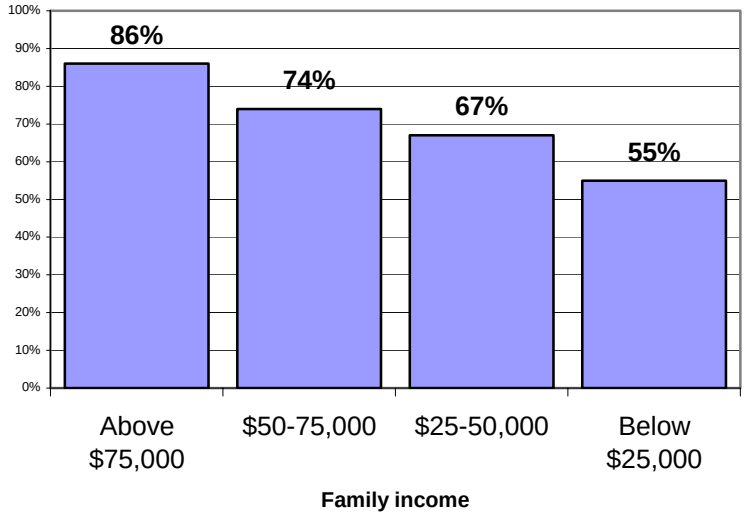
Source: NCES, "Students Whose Parents Did Not Go to College: Postsecondary Access, Persistence, and Attainment," December 2001

24. Those from families with income below $25,000 had a 55 percent chance. *(See Figure 3.14.*)

Because many black and Latino youth are from low-income families and have parents who did not attend college, their chance for college is lower than that of white students. *Postsecondary Education Opportunity* reports that nationally, 75 percent of white non-Hispanic high school graduates enroll in college by age 24, compared to 63 percent of blacks and 61 percent of Latinos.

Figure 3.14 -- The Economics of College Attendance

High SchoolGraduates' Chance of Attending College by Age 24, by Family Income



Source: *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, December 2001 (based on CPS data)

It is important to note that these odds are just for high school graduates. From the perspective of a ninth-grader, the chance of reaching college is even lower for low-income, black, and Latino youth because many never graduate from high school.

Furthermore, enrolling in college does not guarantee success. A student's likelihood of attaining an associate's or bachelor's degree – just like the chance for graduating from high school and the chance for enrolling in college – is linked to academic preparation and family income.

Many students who enroll in college are underprepared academically and need remedial courses before they can enter credit-bearing classes. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that in 2000, 28 percent of all freshmen nationally were enrolled in remedial reading, writing, or math. At community colleges, the figure was 42 percent, while at public four-year institutions it was 20 percent. The more remedial courses a student needs, the less likelihood that he or she will persist to earn a college degree.

Family income has a strong impact on a student's chance of completing college – even stronger than its effect on high school graduation or college enrollment. *Postsecondary Education Opportunity* used Current Population Survey data (1997-2001) to estimate how many students who enrolled in two-year or four-year college attained a bachelor's degree by age 24. Among college students from families in the bottom income quartile (family income below $35,000), only 12 percent received a BA by age 24. Of students whose families were in the top quartile (above $75,000), 66 percent earned a baccalaureate degree by age 24.

SIDEBAR: *The Cost of College Matters*

Many low-income students don't pursue college because they think they can't afford it, when actually they can. A study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that high school students and parents often overestimate the cost of college by thousands of dollars. Efforts to inform students and their families about costs and financial aid options can make a difference in college-going rates.

Low tuition also makes a difference in college access and retention. Historically, the Southern states have kept tuition low at their public colleges and universities. However, in the past three years, in response to revenue shortfalls, several states have raised community college tuition precipitously. The College Board reports that between 2000 and 2003, community college tuition in the South increased by 34 percent. If that trend continues, tuition at Southern community colleges will soon exceed the national average.

Tuition at the South's public four-year colleges and universities remains well below the national average, despite an increase of 23 percent between 2000 and 2003.

Figure 3.15 — Tuition Trends at 2-Year and 4-Year Colleges

College Board Region	Average tuition 2003-04	Percent increase (constant dollars), 1993-2003	Percent increase (constant dollars), 2000-2003
2-year public colleges			
U.S.	$1905	22%	10%
South*	$1862	52%	34%
Southwest**	$1376	54%	16%
4-year public college and universities			
U.S.	$4694	47%	28%
South	$3758	37%	23%
Southwest	$3756	93%	22%

Source: The College Board, *Trends in College Pricing 2003*.
* "South" includes the MDC South minus WV, AR, OK, and TX
** "Southwest" is AR, OK, TX, and NM

The availability of financial aid also affects college access for low-income students. Between 1992 and 2002, financial aid did not kept pace with rising tuition nationally. At the same time, state financial aid programs have been moving from grants toward loans, and from need-based aid toward merit-based and/or middle class-oriented strategies such as tax credits. Of the seven states with the largest purely merit-based scholarship programs in 2000-01, five were in the South: Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, and South Carolina.

In early 2004, the University of North Carolina announced an innovative financial aid program geared to the neediest students. The "Carolina Covenant" guarantees that qualifying low-income students can attend UNC-Chapel Hill debt-free, with 100 percent of their costs covered through grants and work-study. The program has attracted attention from public universities around the country and may become a model that is widely replicated.

In a study of students who enrolled as freshmen in Southern four-year colleges and universities in 1995, the Southern Regional Education Board found that only 48 percent graduated within six years. College retention and graduation rates vary widely among the Southern states, but only in Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia did four-year colleges and universities manage to graduate more than half their freshman within six years. At community colleges, retention and graduation rates are considerably lower than at four-year institutions – in part because community colleges

enroll more nontraditional students who have competing work and family responsibilities.

Sidebar: *The Pipeline to a College Degree*

In 2003, Jobs For the Future (JFF) inaugurated a national campaign to "Double the Numbers" of low-income and minority youth who attain an associate's or bachelor's degree by 2020. JFF offers a comprehensive framework for plugging the leaks in the educational pipeline that prevent many youth from enrolling and succeeding in college.

1. High school graduation. First, all high students must graduate prepared for college. This calls for high-quality preparation (high expectations, robust curriculum, supportive environment, highly qualified teachers) and better information about college, including awareness of the benefits of college, awareness of financial aid programs, and understanding of the academic requirements of college. The latter is conveyed most easily when secondary and postsecondary curricula and standards are well-aligned.

2. College enrollment. Second, more low-income youth must enroll in college. That requires access (including affordable tuition, financial aid, and flexible opportunities for learning, such as distance education). It also requires better support systems and incentives/accountability, including assistance with financial aid and college applications.

3. College graduation. Finally, more students who enroll in college must complete an associate's or bachelor's degree. That requires better support systems and incentives/accountability, including academic support; personal support; opportunities for work-based and applied learning; and counseling on financial, academic, and career matters.

From high school to prison

For a growing number of youth – especially black males – the road from high school leads not to work, college, or the military, but to prison. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, an African American male born in 2001 has a one in three chance of spending time behind bars during his lifetime.

From 1980 to 2002, the U.S. prison population quadrupled. The South has an incarceration rate (526 behind bars per 100,000 residents) markedly higher than the nation (470 per 100,000). Our region accounts for four of every 10 Americans in prison or jail.

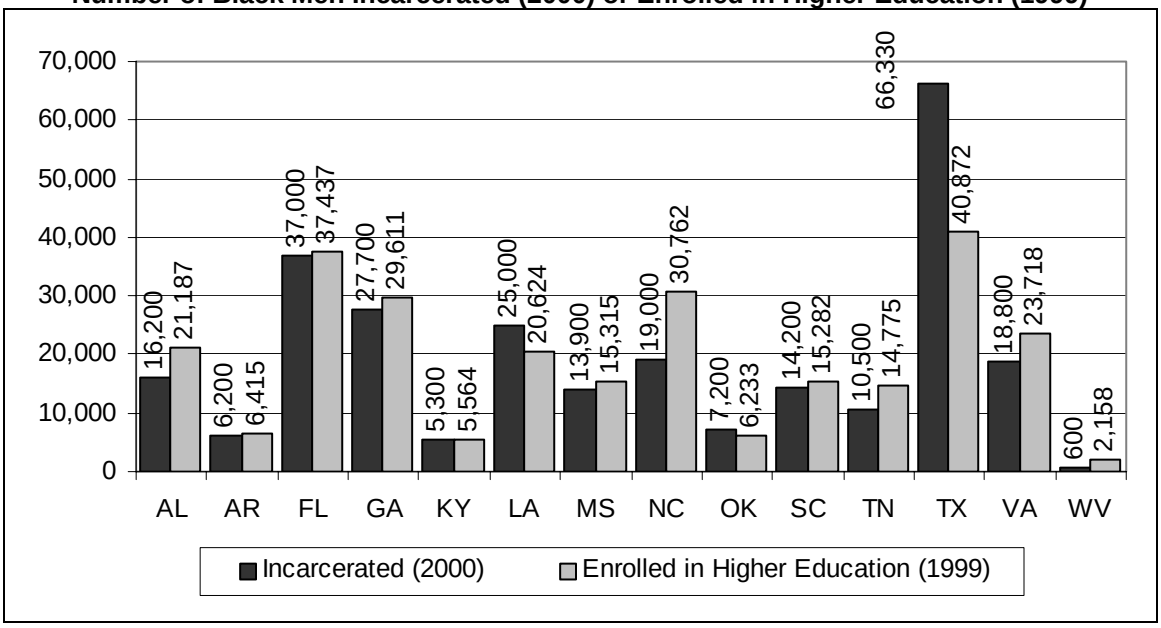
More punitive policies for violent crimes and drug-related offenses have fueled the two-decade rise in incarceration rates. But there is also a critical intersection of penal trends and educational issues: A high proportion of high school dropouts land in prison.

A multi-year study of the Current Population Survey (1996-2001) found that 16 percent of all male high school dropouts ages 18-24 were either in prison, jail, or on parole. For young African American men who dropped out of high school, the chance of being in prison, jail, or parole was 30 percent. For native-born Hispanics, the chance was one in five, and for whites, one in ten.

Similarly, the Justice Policy Institute reported that in 1999, half of the black men ages 30 to 34 who had dropped out of high school had prison records. Among white male dropouts in that age group, more than 12 percent had prison records.

In most Southern states, there are nearly as many black men in prison as enrolled in higher education. In three states – Oklahoma, Louisiana and, most strikingly, Texas – there were more African American men in prison in 1999 than enrolled in higher education. *(See Figure 3.16.)*

Figure 3.16 -- Black Men: College or Prison?
Number of Black Men Incarcerated (2000) or Enrolled in Higher Education (1999)



Source: Justice Policy Institute, 2000

In most Southern states, there are nearly as many black men in prison as enrolled in higher education. In three states – Oklahoma, Louisiana and, most strikingly, Texas – there were more African American men in prison in 1999 than enrolled in higher education.

In recent years, schools districts across the country have adopted zero tolerance policies for violent and disruptive behavior. The result has been a skyrocketing increase in suspensions. The Harvard Civil Rights Project reports that the number of students suspended annually has doubled since 1974.

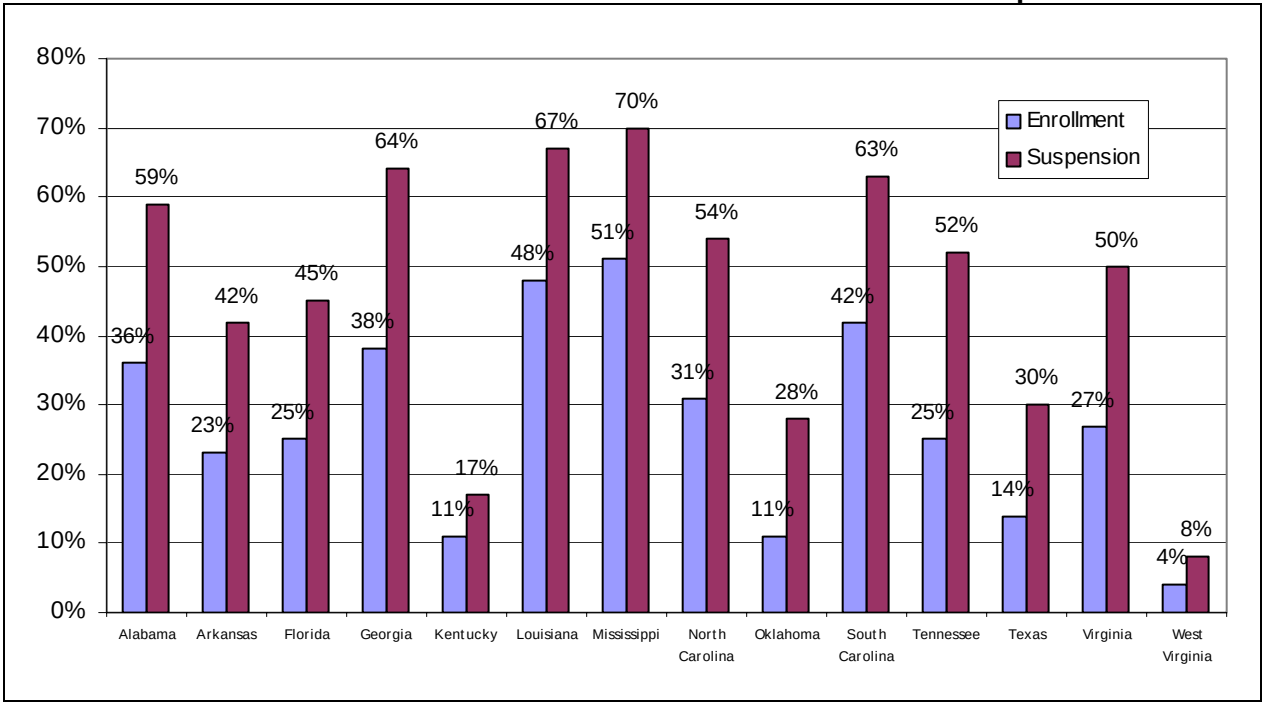
Here again, race comes into play. In every Southern state (and nationally), the number of black students suspended far exceeds their proportion in school enrollment. In Arkansas, for example, African Americans comprise 23 percent of all public school students but account for 42 percent of all out-of-school suspension incidents. In Oklahoma, African American students comprise 11 percent of enrollment and 28 percent of suspensions; in Tennessee, the figures are 25 and 52 percent. *(See Figure 3.17.)*

Some students are suspended because they disrupt school or pose a threat to others. Most need help, not a pathway to prison. Yet only half the states require school districts to provide alternative education for students who are suspended or expelled.

Some students are suspended for behaviors that could be handled without removing them from school, if circumstances were different – for instance, if classrooms were not overcrowded, or if teachers were better trained to interpret and deal with the behaviors of students from varied backgrounds.

Too often, suspension is the first step toward encounters with the juvenile justice system; and, increasingly, juvenile offenders end up as adult offenders. Once on the road to prison, it is hard to turn around. A prison record makes it difficult to get a job, and ex-felons who seek to enroll in college may be barred from receiving financial aid. The Southern economy cannot afford such a high casualty rate for its future citizens and labor force.

Figure 3.17 – Systemic Disparities in School Suspensions
African Americans as a Percent of All Students Enrolled and Suspended -- 2000



Source: Ed Watch/Ed Trust

In every Southern state (and nationally), the number of black students suspended far exceeds their proportion in school enrollment. In Arkansas, for example, African Americans comprise 23 percent of all public school students but account for 42 percent of all out-of-school suspension incidents. While some students are suspended for threatening behavior, others exhibit behaviors that could be handled without removing them from school if circumstances were different – for instance, if classrooms were not overcrowded, or if teachers were better trained to interpret and deal with the behaviors of students from varied backgrounds.

IV. The Ever-Present Issues: Race and Equity

It is known as resegregation. And it is a distinctly Southern trend.

All regions, not the South alone, have reason to worry about increasing isolation among whites, blacks, and Latinos – and between the poor and the affluent – in public education. Indeed, the Northeast's schools are the most racially segregated in the nation. And yet, it is only in the South that a 30-year movement toward desegregation has reversed.

In 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its *Brown* ruling, virtually no Southern black children attended public schools with white children. The South had effectively segregated students by race under the "separate but equal" system. But that system cracked under the weight of *Brown* and subsequent judicial rulings.

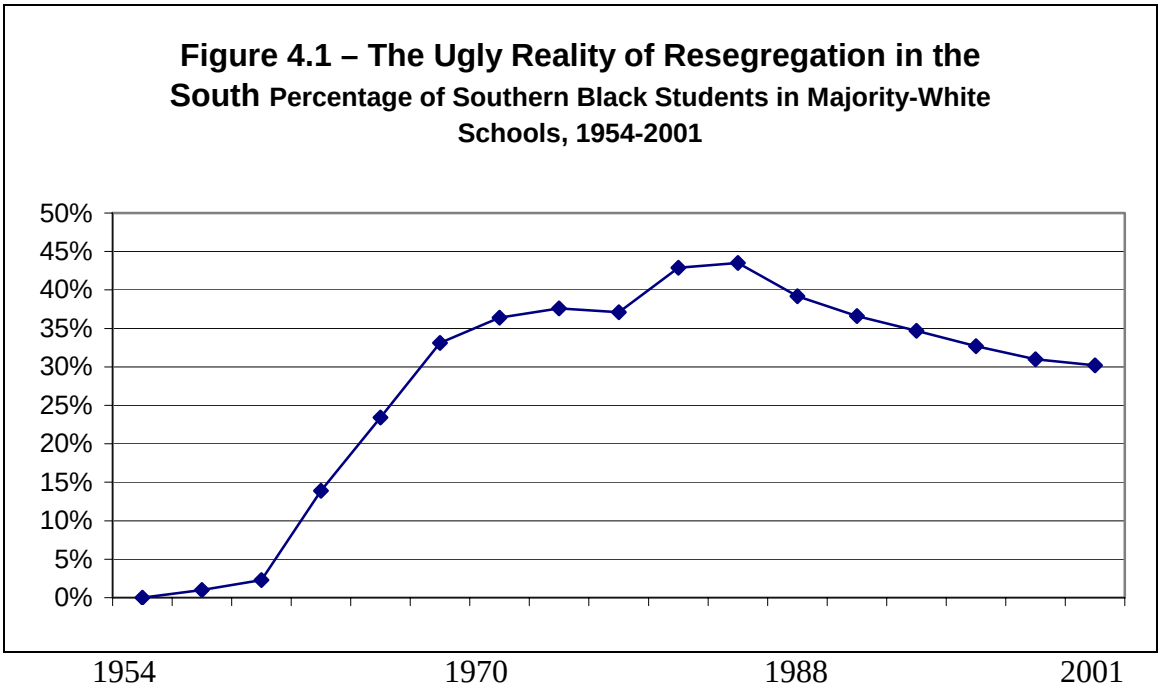
The system did not crack easily or evenly. In the Mississippi Delta and across the Black Belt, segregated schooling persists with black students in public schools and most white students in private institutions that sprang up in the backlash to court orders. Meanwhile, a three-decade march of white families to sprawling suburbs has left such cities as New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Birmingham, Atlanta, and Memphis with such majorities of black students as to make genuine desegregation hugely difficult.

Still, under the guidance of skillful state and local leaders who understood that the South's future depended on greatly enhancing educational quality, much of the region made steady progress. In Louisville and Raleigh, mergers of city and county schools facilitated desegregation. After a spurt of initial opposition, civic leadership in Charlotte made busing work as ordered in the *Swann v. Mecklenburg* case. Its effectiveness in compliance became an essential ingredient in that city's emergence as an economic powerhouse.

Indeed, by the end of the 1980s, Southern schools had become the most integrated in the nation.

The authoritative tracking of racial trends in schools in the South and the nation comes from the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. It has found that desegregation hit a peak in the South in 1988, with more than four out of 10 black students attending majority-white schools. Since then, desegregation has steadily eroded. In 2001, only three out of 10 black students attended majority-white schools in the South. *(See Figure 4.1.)* (More data on individual school districts is available in the Appendix.)

Figure 4.1 – The Ugly Reality of Resegregation in the South Percentage of Southern Black Students in Majority-White Schools, 1954-2001



Source: *Brown at Fifty: King's Dream or Plessy's Nightmare?* Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee, Harvard Civil Rights Project, January 2004.

[The Harvard Civil Rights Project took its data from: Southern Education Reporting Service in *The Ordeal of Desegregation* by Reed Sarratt, Harper & Row, New York, 1966, p. 362; HEW Press Release, May 27, 1968; OCR data tapes; 1992-93, 1994-95, 1996-97, 1998-99, 2000-01, 2001-02 NCES Common Core of Data.]

"What is striking about the Southern trends," says the Civil Rights Project, "is that the South was steadily moving toward more integration and somewhat suddenly, in the early 1990s, turned toward increasing segregation with each passing year."

While the movement toward desegregation emanated from the historic 1954 court ruling, no single event or policy decision has led to resegregation. As an outgrowth of three Supreme Court decisions from 1991 to 1995, lower courts increasingly found school districts to have achieved racially unitary systems and released them from mandatory desegregation orders. The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit (with jurisdiction over Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia) has gone a step further. It has prohibited student assignment plans based on race, thus forbidding local initiatives designed to achieve racial integration. (However, the Fourth Circuit ruling has been called into question by the 2003 Supreme Court decision approving race-conscious admission decisions in higher education.)

Today, the South finds itself buffeted by conflicting pressures and competing demands. Many Southerners, both white and black, want more freedom to send their children to neighborhood or charter schools of their choice; and they resist further efforts by school administrators to make student assignments designed to sustain desegregation goals. At the same time, the demographic face of Southern states and communities is

changing. A growing number of school children are Latinos, and a rising generation of blacks and Latinos will form the core of the South's near-future workforce and civil society.

School systems that increasingly isolate white students from blacks and Latinos – and isolate children of the poor from children of the more affluent – will fail to prepare young people adequately for participation in an equitable society and a competitive economy.

Integration by income level

In the absence of court orders requiring racial desegregation, a few Southern school districts have shifted toward a policy of using family income as a factor in student assignments. This is a significant shift and one that holds promise for children from poor and near-poor families.

Substantial evidence shows that students from low-income families score higher on tests when they go to school with students from more affluent families. Middle-income students do worse than their peers when they go to high-poverty schools. Thus, it is imperative that Southern states and communities eliminate schools with high concentrations of students from poor families.

Gary Orfield, director of the Harvard project, summarizes the general rule: "What I tell parents is that it's not magic to sit next to a white kid, but to be in a middle class school rather than a poverty school makes a huge difference."

Some high-poverty schools, of course, manage to produce academically high-performing graduates. Such schools require extraordinary educational leadership and professional support beyond that available to most schools in distressed areas. As inspirational as these schools are, the South cannot – and should not – count on extraordinary bursts of courage and energy as a basis for education policy.

The imperative to reduce isolation

When it was a region divided legally by race, the South suffered from its fractured society, tarnished image, and sluggish economy. Today, Southerners must recognize the consequences of endemic isolation and a divided society as a threat to their self-interest. Despite the region's progress over the last quarter of a century, its communities will suffer anew if they allow children to grow up and go to school isolated by race and income.

The racial and income composition of schools matters – for individual students, for civic health, and for the South's economic advancement. And it matters because of the core American ideals of equity and justice.

When schools isolate children by income, disadvantaged students are at risk because high-poverty schools almost always provide less-than-adequate education. When it comes to income, separate invariably means inferior. The consequence of high-poverty schools is a large population of undereducated youth and adults and a society more

rigidly divided into rich and poor, which in turn threatens the region's economic future and civic health.

Racial isolation also poses a threat to the South's future. Despite the truth of Gary Orfield's statement that "it's not magic to sit next to a white kid," public schools have an important role to play in teaching children to interact positively with others from diverse backgrounds. Racially integrated schools have value for all students, regardless of income or ethnicity. The ability to live and work with people who are different from oneself is essential in our increasingly multi-ethnic society and global economy.

Sidebar: *Wake County Holds the Line, Under Pressure*

Twenty-five years ago, the Wake County and Raleigh city school systems merged as a result of a hard-won political battle. That momentous decision set the stage for integration and, more recently, for a sustained effort to prevent a drift back to racial isolation in the public schools.

As the county grew rapidly in jobs and population, families increasingly settled in sprawling, affluent suburbs. To sustain the older, downtown schools, the county Board of Education established in the early 1980s a magnet-school network with enhanced educational offerings that attracted white students to schools that otherwise would have declined in enrollment. In addition, officials developed student assignment plans with guidelines for maximum and minimum enrollment of minority students in each school.

In 2000, in consideration of recent court rulings and with suburban parents stepping up pressure for their children to be assigned to neighborhood schools, the Wake Board of Education replaced its 20-year-old race-based assignment plan with a system based on income and student achievement levels. (Each student also has the option of applying for admission to a magnet or year-round program.) The Board of Education has set goals that: (1) no school will have an enrollment of more than 40 percent students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and (2) no school will have more than 25 percent of its students below grade level.

Under the new assignment plan, student performance has risen steadily and achievement gaps have slowly narrowed. In the 2002-2003 school year, all Wake County high schools achieved recognition as Schools of Excellence or Schools of Distinction, meaning that they achieved expected or high growth in student performance on End of Grade tests, the percentage of students completing College Prep or Tech Prep programs of study, and other state-mandated measures.

Wake remains a fast-growing school system – up from 94,000 students in 1999 to 109,000 in 2004. On an average day, the county runs 714 buses that transport 53,300 students. By race and ethnicity, its enrollment is approximately 62 percent white, 26 percent African American, 6 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian, 2 percent multiracial, and 0.3 percent American Indian.

As a result of population growth, the county has carried out a steady program of school-facility expansion. Thus, each year school officials face the prospect of thousands of reassignments – and the protests of parents. Lately, the mayors of suburban towns around Raleigh have joined with parents to seek a rollback of the county's reassignment guidelines.

Under intense pressure from critics, the School Board has sought to maintain its goal of ensuring that individual schools do not have a high percentage of poor or low-achieving students. In doing so, Wake County has emerged as a model for other Southern school systems to study. Despite student-assignment controversies, voters in the county enacted a $450 million bond issue in 2003 for the construction of new schools. They also reelected the school board chair, who has led the effort to prevent isolation of low-income students.

V. Levers for change, pathways to success

In this *State of the South* report, our purpose is to renew the South's commitment to equity, economic competitiveness, and civic health through the delicate, yet potent, instrument of public education.

We call on the region's leaders to develop public schools that meet the needs of a fast-changing economy and a multi-ethnic, democratic society. In doing so, they will bolster both the competitiveness and democratic life of our communities.

As they have done in the past, it is critical that today's public schools lift more people into the middle class that forms the bedrock of our economy and of our communities. Schools do more than prepare people for work and careers; schools transmit a sense of place, an understanding of history, and an appreciation for democratic values. Unless public schools accomplish these tasks, the South faces the prospect of a populace fractured along ethnic and class lines, and communities not competitive enough for the new economy.

In today's South, disparities in public education do not come etched exclusively in black and white. Disparities show up in a mix of circumstances: between metropolitan and rural schools; between schools attended by the affluent and schools attended by the poor; between the test scores and other achievement indicators of whites and of blacks and Latinos; between attainment of girls and boys; between schools filled with experienced, well-qualified teachers and schools with inexperienced teachers and high student/teacher ratios.

To refresh their understanding of how vital schools are for the South's future, public officials and civic leaders would do well to revisit the text of the *Brown v. Board* ruling and read beyond the familiar declaration that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." In a section not often quoted, but in words that ring as true now as in 1954, the Supreme Court declared that "today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments… It is the very foundation of good citizenship."

In this report, we have focused especially on high schools, which, as the final compulsory segment of education, stand at a critical intersection in the lives of young people. Developing strong high schools across the South – in small towns and big cities, as well as affluent suburbs – is a challenge that cannot be relegated only to those within school systems. To be sure, retooling high schools to propel all students toward success requires principals, teachers, and counselors who are passionately committed to developing the potential of every student. But it also requires the constructive collaboration of parents, businesses, and community groups. Effective schools need

adequate funding, creative policy-setting, and community involvement. Those are jobs for public decision-makers, opinion leaders, and citizens in all quarters of the region's states and communities. Good schools are a matter of civic heart.

This report has discussed four crucial trends facing the South:

- the region's continued prosperity requires more people with higher skills and education beyond high school;
- the region's young population is increasingly Latino and African American;
- many low-income and minority youth attend isolated, resource-poor schools, where they cannot get the education they need;
- our high schools fail to engage and inspire many students, regardless of income and race.

In the section that follows, we spotlight policy and programmatic levers that the South's leaders can use to respond to those trends. We urge regional, state, and local leaders to consider **five overarching goals**. The first three relate in particular to the transformation of high schools because they provide the last opportunity of compulsory public education. The last two speak to public education more broadly.

1. **Ensure that all young people graduate from high school prepared for further education.**
2. **Give students multiple pathways through and out of high schools – more options and equitable options.**
3. **Build stronger connections between adults and adolescents, between schools and communities.**
4. **Eliminate high-poverty schools to bring an end to ethnic and social class isolation.**
5. **Develop a corps of superbly trained, well-paid, professional teachers.**

1. Ensure that all young people graduate from high school prepared for further education.

<u>The South must align high school curriculum and standards with the requirements of the emerging economy and postsecondary education.</u>

The quality and intensity of the curriculum a student takes in high school matters. The curriculum should be regularly aligned with the demands of postsecondary education and the demands of a fast-shifting economy.

Just as curriculum must be updated, so must assessment. The South must strive for measurements that go beyond a single, standardized test.

Accountability is critical. The public expects results. And, in fact, the South has been a leader in state-mandated accountability measures. Still, our states use rather blunt instruments – seat time and standardized tests – to chart results. Neither of those measures tells policymakers, parents, community members, or students themselves how well their schools prepare graduates for success after high school.

For states that seek to align the high school curriculum with the skills required for college and the workplace and to develop appropriate measurement tools, The American Diploma Project is a good resource. It has conducted extensive research to define the core knowledge and skills that high school graduates need, and it offers recommendations for developing new accountability measures that help bridge the gap between high school and college.

The South can become a pioneer in a new accountability movement. Southern states should forge collaborations between and among their systems of public schools, community colleges, and public universities to align curriculum and develop authentic assessment tools that propel students to the next phase of their education. States should consider development of an "exit-entrance exam" that certifies a student not only has successfully completed high school but also is ready for postsecondary education.

Across the South, states and communities must extend literacy instruction through high school.

The higher the standards for high school graduation, the more imperative it is that schools have the capacity and incentive to help students master challenging material and learn to read critically and analytically. Weak literacy skills leave many students ill-equipped to succeed in high school courses, let alone tackle postsecondary learning. In 2002, one in four twelfth-graders in the U.S. had reading skills below the "basic" level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, indicating that they lacked even "partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills." Especially high numbers of low-income and minority youth read below the basic level.

A recent focus on improving reading in the early grades has raised achievement levels among the South's (and the nation's) fourth- and eighth-graders since 1988. But gains in the early grades erode unless middle and high schools sustain intensive literacy instruction.

Marginal readers are, understandably, more likely to drop out of school than are successful readers. Most high school dropouts read below the ninth-grade level. At particular risk are recent immigrants who are learning English as a second language while in high school.

All high schools – and especially high-needs schools – should have reading specialists who regularly assess students' reading skills. These specialists also should be responsible for ensuring that struggling readers have access to specialized instruction, and they should help content-area teachers integrate reading instruction across the curriculum.

School libraries, in collaboration with public libraries, also have a role in improving high school students' literacy skills.

2. Give students more options and equitable options.

Across the U.S., secondary education has entered an era rich with experimentation. States and school districts are testing several alternative models for high schools. The Southern states should intensify efforts to give high school students more options.

The best of the new models provide a strong academic foundation that prepares all students for postsecondary success. They offer broader individual choice and provide a personalized environment that nurtures students' growth and development. They have strong connections to the community, to employers, and to postsecondary institutions.

For students who see high school as simply marking time until real-life begins, the South should provide opportunities to accelerate learning and earn college credit. For students who drop out, states and school districts should provide new second-chance options as an alternative to the GED. These include community-based programs like Youthbuild that combine work and school and alternative high school programs operated by charter schools, community colleges, and other institutions.

Not so long ago, too many schools in the South "tracked" students. In the process, they put too many students on a track to a low-wage, low-skill job for life. Now, the challenge is to guide young people to customize their high school experiences to fit their ambitions by opening options for students rather than consigning them to a predetermined track.

Sidebar: *Gonzalo Garza Independence High School, Austin, Texas*

The Austin Independent School District 's dropout problem had become so severe in the late 1990s that, by some district estimates, one in four high school freshmen were quitting school before graduation. AISD's superintendent asked a seasoned middle-school principal to design and lead a new academic alternative high school that could draw students back into the system. That experiment – Gonzalo Garza Independence High School – opened in January of 1998, has since graduated more than 850 at-risk students, and is now a focus of international interest and acclaim.

Garza is located in a poor neighborhood near downtown Austin, in a rehabbed elementary school fully wired with a state-of-the-art computer network. Enrollment is limited to 350 students; anyone with 10 or more high school credits may apply. The school's open admission/open exit structure means that students arrive and graduate all through the year. Classes run eight weeks on, two weeks off year-round, a schedule that, like much else at Garza, was suggested by the students themselves. Since many of the students hold jobs, class times are flexible. An accredited day-care center on the campus simplifies school for teenage parents, currently 15% of the student body.

To graduate, Garza students must take the same standardized tests and fulfill all the course requirements of any other Texas high school, but as they do, they are urged to find and follow their own genuine interests. Working one-on-one with the school's faculty (called "facilitators"

rather than teachers), Garza students bend the curriculum in each class toward subtopics and methods that best motivate them to keep learning. Rather than writing a research paper, a student of American history may produce a film that explores industrialization at the turn of the 20th Century; students in a government class tackled a local zoning issue with a collaborative assessment of "big box" retail stores. The courses at Garza are self-paced so that students may progress quickly in some subjects and slow down, gaining the added help they need, in classes more difficult for them.

Through a partnership with the University of Texas School of Social Work, each member of the Garza faculty receives training in "solution-based" education. Rather than trying to curb behavior with social competition and punishment, this approach guides students to identify and build on their personal strengths, to set realistic goals and move toward them. Participants in the UT-Garza training have written a solution-based manual for other schools that may want to adopt this strategy.

Garza's counselor/student ratio is four times greater than at traditional high schools in the district. Students and counselors know each other and, by the time a student nears graduation, have developed a solid college or employment plan. Garza also acknowledges the emotional transformations of adolescence. Students who have had problems with substance abuse, depression, or disruptive families are urged to face those problems with the school's counselors and in supportive groups of their peers.

While Garza was originally designed to bring dropouts back to school, its individualized curriculum, small scale, rigorous courses, and nurturing environment have attracted some of the district's most gifted students. For their own reasons, many of these young people, too, find themselves at odds with the traditional high school regimen. Garza's student body is diverse, racially, experientially, and scholastically. Its students say that fundamental to their success – and the school's – is that Garza is a place they want to be.

<u>The South needs high school programs that propel students toward skilled occupations that do not require a baccalaureate degree.</u>

In high schools across the South, the conventional notion of "vocational education" must become a thing of the past. The emergence of Career and Technical Education (CTE) reflects the need for more rigorous, technology-oriented courses that prepare students for the modern economy.

The goal of traditional voc-ed was to prepare students for full-time employment. Today's CTE programs must prepare students for both full-time employment *and* postsecondary education – pre-baccalaureate technical education and four-year college.

States, communities, and schools must set high standards for CTE curricula and provide the support students need to succeed. CTE students should take challenging courses that are aligned with state standards, postsecondary requirements, and workplace demands. In its 2002 survey of teachers in schools that are members of the High Schools That Work (HSTW) network, the Southern Regional Education Board found that only 26 percent "strongly agreed" that their school had the same standards and expectations in English, math, and science classes for students planning to enter four-year college, two-year college, or work. In non-HSTW schools, the percentage would likely be even lower. Career and technical education has a long way to go to match the rigor of the college-prep curriculum.

Adding rigor to CTE programs does not, however, mean taking away the hands-on, work-based learning that is a hallmark of good career and technical education. For many young people – especially students who enter high school with low grades and test scores and are at risk of dropping out – a career-oriented curriculum can make high school more relevant and engaging and spur them toward community college or a four-year degree. As states move toward "single diploma" systems and/or make the college prep curriculum the default, they should also give schools the flexibility to develop alternative curricula that teach high-level skills using different techniques. Rigor need not mean giving up relevance.

Schools reward what they value, and students interpret those values. High schools primarily reward achievement in athletics and college prep courses. If students are to consider CTE as a valued option, schools must develop effective ways to reward achievement in CTE programs.

Schools must engage employers in CTE programs. Some of the best work-based and classroom-based learning activities are those planned cooperatively by employers and educators.

Finally, states and school districts must upgrade CTE teachers' skills and give them ongoing professional support. The preparation and certification standards for CTE teachers have not kept up with the demands of the changing economy, and many CTE teachers are poorly prepared to teach rigorous courses.

<u>The South should expand and upgrade the ability of high schools to offer accelerated learning options.</u>

To make the last years of high school more valuable, many high schools offer opportunities for students to take college-level courses through Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate programs, and dual/concurrent enrollment. (Dual and concurrent enrollment arrangements allow high school students to take college courses for which they receive both high school and college credit.) When schools encourage more students to take these courses, the result can be dramatic.

Several Southern states do an above-average job of making AP courses widely available across districts and high schools, but African American and Latino participation is low. When states and school districts enact policies to expand participation and improve success rates in AP, it can make a difference. Texas, for example, launched an initiative in 1999 to expand access to AP courses to underserved students. The state pays teachers to attend summer institutes where they learn to teach AP courses, and it subsidizes exam fees for students. The percentage of minority students taking AP courses has risen by 74 percent.

Some form of dual or concurrent enrollment is available in every Southern state, but access for low-income students can be limited by the cost of tuition. It makes sense for the state to cover tuition costs, as Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia do. Virginia's new Senior Year Plus program goes a step beyond the typical dual enrollment model. It will allow high school seniors to earn up to a full semester of college credit,

tuition-free, by the time they graduate. It also allows career-bound students to take a free semester of community college courses leading to an occupational certificate.

Accelerated courses can motivate high school students, give them a jump start in college, and even save families part of the cost of college tuition. What's important is not just the availability of accelerated courses, but encouraging more students to take them and providing the academic support to help them succeed.

"Blended institutions" are promising models.

Blended institutions, such as middle colleges and Early College High Schools, are a new and growing model for accelerated learning.

A middle college sits on the campus of a two-year or four-year college, and students take courses from both high school and college faculty. An Early College High School is essentially a small high school in which students have access to college facilities and resources, and which blends high school and college courses. Students graduate in four or five years with both a high school diploma and an associate's degree, or with sufficient college credits to enter a university as a sophomore.

By 2002, there were at least 14 middle colleges in the South: six in North Carolina, two in Virginia, two in Tennessee, and one each in Florida, Oklahoma, Texas, and West Virginia. Under the Gates Foundation's Early College High School Initiative, the South will also soon be home to a number of Early College High Schools.

The missions and structures of middle and early colleges vary from site to site. They sometimes target low-performing students of high potential who are not successful in traditional high schools but may thrive in a different learning environment. The middle colleges in Virginia specifically reach out to high school dropouts ages 18-24. Early College High Schools target low-income and minority high school students, first-generation college-goers, and English language learners.

Community colleges and small four-year colleges have emerged as significant partners with public high schools at this critical moment for secondary education, and the Southern states should foster an expansion of such partnerships.

One size does not fit all.

Large high schools have become impersonal, alienating environments for many young people. Such schools have foreclosed options for those adolescents least well served. They have become distinctly undemocratic. By almost all measures, the South needs a change.

Reducing size in and of itself is not a cure-all. Still, students need alternatives to large, impersonal high schools. Reduced size enables important school characteristics to flourish, like the personalized relationships that are critical to healthy adolescent development, academic achievement, and civic engagement. The work of the Rural School and Community Trust provides excellent research and case studies on these benefits.

In some cases, education officials ought to divide overly large comprehensive high schools into two or three schools-within-schools. When building new schools, urban and suburban districts should seek out smaller campuses and build schools for enrollment of several hundred instead of several thousand.

Career themes can add value.

Career academies give states and school districts another option. Such schools generally combine a college preparatory curriculum with a career theme, such as health sciences, transportation, construction, education, business, or computer sciences.

Many career academies offer dual enrollment or other opportunities for students to earn college credit. Most operate as schools-within-schools, but freestanding career academies became more common in the 1990s. The best career academies have business partners who help prepare students to work in their fields, offer internships and externships, and provide successful students with jobs upon graduation. And they provide a strong academic foundation to prepare graduates for college and the workforce.

A recent study by MDRC found that career academies are particularly effective in improving labor market opportunities for male students who enter high school at risk of dropping out. Young men who attended career academies earned an average of $10,000 more in the four years after graduation than comparable students at other high schools.

Sidebar: *Three Stories: Changes afoot across the South*

The South can take heart from efforts across the region to provide adolescents with an enriched experience in grades 9 through 12. We offer three examples of efforts in Southern communities that encompass the goals set forth in this chapter. Each school district has taken its own approach, but their stories have these common elements:

Students take high-level courses in small, personal learning environments.

Students are provided with strong guidance, through counselors or through teachers. Conversation about what comes after high school is part of the culture.

Schools receive external support. Some are part of a national network that provides a program, a set of principles, and/or funding. All receive support from intermediary organizations in their community.

Businesses and community foundations augment local school funding, provide scholarships, offer professional development for teachers, mentor students, and advocate for the schools.

Teachers participate in extensive and focused professional development, including curriculum design and teaching methods. In some cases, teachers also spend time in the workplace, whether through daylong field trips or summer internships.

Career academies in New Orleans
In 1991, the Metrovision Economic Development Partnership was formed as an arm of the New Orleans Regional Chamber of Commerce. It identified education as the number one issue critical to attracting new business to the region.

In 1994, the partnership formed a regional school-to-work council which received a 5-year implementation grant of $4.3 million from the Louisiana School-to-Work office in 1997, as well as a $1.7 million grant from a private foundation. With these funds, the partnership formed 22 career academies in 16 high schools. Initially, the academies were supported by four industry consortia: Architecture, Design, Engineering, and Construction; Financial Services; Hospitality, Travel, and Tourism; and Law and Public Services. By 2003, the partnership (now called the Metrovision School-to-Career Partnership) had dropped one industry consortium, Law and Public Services, and added four more: Culinary Arts; Healthcare; Information Technology; and the Consortium for Out-of-School Youth.

The Partnership also has organized a community awareness initiative, holding more than 80 forums on what students should know and be able to do upon high school graduation. The initiative selected seven high schools to undergo whole-school change based on the recommendations. As one of the founding members of the National Intermediary Network, the partnership's primary role is to serve as a link between schools and community resources. It has emphasized the creation of partnerships between business people and educators. Students are connected to the business community through internships; more than 1,200 students have participated in paid internships since 1997.

Increased academic rigor and personalized school environment in Chattanooga

The Hamilton County School System serves the city of Chattanooga, its suburbs, and surrounding rural areas. This geographically diverse school district collaborated with the Public Education Foundation of Chattanooga to submit a proposal to the Schools for a New Society Initiative, a high school reform effort sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Hamilton County partnership was selected along with six other urban partnerships, and the school district received a five-year, $8 million grant, to be matched with $6 million from the Public Education Foundation.

Now in its second year of implementation, the Schools for a New Society Initiative has allowed each of Hamilton County's 17 high schools to redesign its structures and curricula to meet the district goals of (1) a challenging, engaging, and relevant curriculum; (2) a professional learning community; (3) increased personalization within the schools; and (4) greater flexibility. Rather than imposing a set approach to reform, Schools for a New Society encourages schools and their community partners to work together to create locally determined changes to accomplish shared goals.

Before implementing reforms, Hamilton County Schools solicited students' and teachers' views on their high schools through surveys and district-wide forums. Student leaders meet monthly with the superintendent to discuss school issues. The chair of the student advisory committee sits on the local school board. All high schools now have advisee groups that meet regularly to ensure that each student has a close relationship with at least one faculty member.

Schools offer ninth-grade transition programs during the summer, which aim to set a positive tone for rising freshmen and connect them with classmates and teachers. A few Hamilton County high schools have further sought to personalize education by creating ninth-grade and upper-level academies.

Recognizing that the traditional three-track diploma – which divided students into university, dual, and technical paths – kept standards low for students who chose the technical path, Hamilton County Schools created a new single-path diploma plan. The single-path diploma, which includes a senior project requirement and raises core course requirements in math, science, and foreign languages, is designed to give all graduates the options of pursuing further education and joining the workforce.

Community members have expressed concern that students may be unable to meet the stringent requirements of the single-path diploma, and the schools are addressing that concern through remediation programs. Five schools offer "sunrise" and "sunset" classes for enrichment and remediation. Literacy specialists and support people meet regularly to share new teaching strategies. In one urban high school with particularly high needs, a state waiver allows literacy to be taught in every classroom. Early college placement tests in math encourage seniors to get remediation before entering college.

Three Hamilton County high schools have overhauled their vocational education programs and begun to design career academies. Several schools have instituted interdisciplinary units, technology-infused coursework, off-campus internships, community-based learning and problem-based learning as curricular

reforms that seek to make education more relevant. At the same time, expanded advanced placement and dual enrollment offerings make upper-level courses more accessible.

Propelling more students toward college: Project GRAD

Project GRAD ("Graduation Really Achieves Dreams") began at Houston's Davis High School in 1988 as a Tenneco-funded, four-year college scholarship program. It guaranteed that all students who graduated with good grades and kept up their performance in college would receive a college scholarship. By 1991, the number of Davis students going to college tripled. To improve the project's success rate, Tenneco CEO James Ketelsen developed a program to work with students from kindergarten through high school.

Today, with support from a national organization (Project GRAD USA), the model has spread to twelve school districts and 185 schools. In addition to Houston, its Southern locations include Atlanta, Knoxville, and Brownsville, Texas.

Within school districts, Project GRAD targets K-12 "feeder systems" serving large numbers of low-income and minority students. The model includes five elements:

-- college scholarships – up to $1,000 per year for four years;
-- family support services, provided by Communities in Schools or another community-based program;
-- a discipline program that teachers use to teach youth self-discipline and responsibility;
-- a supplemental math program for the elementary and middle grades; and
-- a reading and writing program for the elementary grades.

In each school district, Project GRAD is coordinated by an independent nonprofit organization that mobilizes local support and coordinates the school-based and community-based elements of the program. As in New Orleans' career academies and Chattanooga's high school reform effort, the local intermediary organizations in Project GRAD communities are instrumental in raising the money needed to implement the program. In Knoxville, where the program serves two feeder systems (14 schools in all), it has a $2.5 million annual budget and 22 employees who supplement school staff. A local foundation provides a substantial contribution to the program and has leveraged additional resources. Project GRAD's external resources provide social services for students and additional resources for teachers. In Knoxville, the program provides the high school with two extra guidance staff who are instrumental in preparing students for college.

Because of Project GRAD's focus on feeder systems, its high schools benefit from the extra support their students have received in elementary and middle school. Students arrive at high school better prepared academically, more highly motivated, and better disciplined.

The promise of a college scholarship is a powerful motivator for high school students. It also motivates parents to push their children toward higher academic achievement and positive school behavior. Students and their parents must sign a contract to become eligible for the GRAD scholarship. To receive the scholarship, students must graduate in four years, successfully complete a college prep curriculum with a grade point average of 2.5 or higher in core academic subjects, and attend at least two summer or intercession institutes. The institutes, usually held on a college campus, provide academic enrichment as well as teaching study skills, time management, and leadership skills. They provide a positive, nonthreatening introduction to college and reinforce students' motivation to pursue postsecondary education.

3. Building stronger connections between adults and adolescents, between schools and communities.

Guidance counselors can be powerful connectors.

Too many high school students feel disconnected. To them, their school seems an island apart from the mainland outside. Their curriculum seems abstract, not connected to a clearly discernible path to college or career.

To forge connections, students need adult supports for learning: during school, after school, over the weekend, and through the summer.

Within high schools, guidance counseling is an important but often missing link in helping students navigate through the curricular and extracurricular offerings and in connecting them to successful participation in the economy and society. Guidance counselors can and should become integral in getting schools to examine their values, to have high expectations, and to use data to identify inequities in services and treatment of students.

Most states and communities pay little attention to guidance counselors. Their job often consists of caretaker functions like scheduling courses, administering standardized tests, running study halls, handling discipline problems, signing excuses for tardy or absent students, and substituting for absent teachers. This misallocation of time and talent represents a costly failure to recognize guidance as a powerful instrument for getting young people on track and propelled toward success.

Far from seeing counselors as schedulers and disciplinarians, the high schools of the South should adopt a new model for guidance of students. Guidance counselors should work directly with students, teachers, parents, and community members on academic achievement. They should provide information about the labor market and should help students plan for both postsecondary education and work. And they should serve as connectors to comprehensive, coordinated community supports for youth and their families.

To realize that vision, the South will need a significant increase in the supply of school guidance counselors – so as to reduce the unacceptably high student/counselor ratio that currently exists in most high schools.

Sidebar: *Guidance as a Catalyst for Change*

In the 1990s, Lilly Endowment Inc. worked in partnership with MDC to help reform guidance in Indiana secondary schools. Each site, in its own way, attempted to build stronger pathways for students from school to future educational and career opportunities. In every case, educators started by looking at their schools' guidance function to determine ways of helping more students get on pathways to postsecondary and career opportunities.

Inevitably, in the process of reforming guidance practices, the schools bumped into other values and practices that needed change before it would be possible to accomplish their goals of creating a rich array of opportunities for all students. Schools discovered that tracking was closing off opportunities for some students to qualify for college entrance. Some teachers discovered they did not really have

high expectations for all their students and as a result were not offering some of them a challenging and engaging instructional program. Some students did not know about the multiple postsecondary options available to them – many thought college meant only "university," which they equated with an option for either wealthy or high-achieving peers.

These and other "discoveries" about the ways their schools were failing to put and keep students on pathways to postsecondary opportunities enabled these sites to go beyond reform of the guidance function of the schools to tackle issues relating to curriculum, testing, and teaching.

Jim McGregor was one of the guidance counselors who participated in the effort. He and his colleagues at Pike High School in Indianapolis tracked student performance over a 10-year period. During that time, the school's enrollment jumped by 70 percent, and the proportion of African American students went up from 31 percent to 51 percent. The percentage of seniors completing a college-path core rose from 47 to 66 percent, and the percentage of African American students completing the core curriculum increased from 25 to 66 percent. All sophomores and juniors now take the PSAT, and all remedial classes were disbanded. The America Student Achievement Institute's web site, http://www.asai.indstate.edu, provides more information.

The South's schools need strong connections to their communities.

The ideal result of community/school engagement is a deep, mutually rewarding relationship that continues to grow over time. It strengthens both the school and the community.

Effective high schools connect students to the community by fostering relationships with community organizations, employers, and others. And communities that want strong high schools must mobilize to improve their schools.

The Rural School and Community Trust provides a model for win-win school and community interaction. The Trust has developed the concept of "place-based education," practiced by more than 700 schools across rural America. Place-based education is centered on the principles of active collaboration between school and community; sustained academic work with students who learn to serve as scholars, workers, and citizens in their communities; and regular review of student progress by teachers, students, and community members.

The community has a deep responsibility of its own for guiding students toward success in college and careers. In urban, suburban, and rural communities, businesses as well as community organizations have important roles to play in connecting students to pathways beyond high school.

Community organizations and individual community members, in partnership with their schools, have the opportunity and the obligation to connect students with their heritage and history, to provide access to community resources, and to strengthen education through tutoring and mentoring. They also should advocate for equitable school policies and funding.

Employers can and should provide work-based learning opportunities for both students and teachers, including internships, job-shadowing, and workplace tours. What's more, employers are well positioned to keep schools informed about the demands of the

workplace and advise schools about curriculum development – especially, integrating industry-valued skill standards and work experience into the academic experience.

Sidebar: *Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County*

Tunica County, Mississippi, was ranked the second poorest county in the nation in the 1990 Census. Early in the 1990s, Tunica became home to a dozen riverboat casinos and its economy grew, tripling its overall wealth. At the same time, Tunica County School District was deeply in debt, its students far behind others in Mississippi, and its school buildings in deep disrepair. While Tunica County's population is 79% African American, its public schools were 99.8% African American. Nearly all the white students in Tunica County attended a private all-white academy. The public schools were on state probation because of low student performance on standardized tests, and a state conservator had been appointed to monitor the district.

Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County formed in 1993 as a coalition of activists, parents, students, and school board members working to create a quality education for African American students in Tunica County. Because most of Tunica's residents had little experience in community organizing, they participated in leadership training operated by Southern Echo, based in Jackson, Mississippi, and based their intergenerational organizational strategy on the Southern Echo model.

Together – and against the wishes of the white community – the newly educated CCBTC negotiated with the Tunica County Board of Supervisors to obtain 12 percent of new casino tax revenues for public schools. As public school funding in Tunica became more stable, private school funding weakened, and many community members began to lobby for a new elementary school in the rapidly growing – and predominately white – northern end of Tunica County. Concerned that the construction of a new, primarily white school would drain much-needed resources from the other public schools, CCBTC held workshops to educate the community on state law and the implications of a new school, conducted a successful petition drive to require a county referendum to borrow the funds, and forced the school board to negotiate with the community about how to use the funds it borrowed.

Tunica County's final decision about whether to apply its funds to build a new school or renovate the existing, grossly inadequate school structures, would set a precedent for school funding and redistricting issues across Mississippi, and the battle gained statewide attention. After four months of negotiations, the school board agreed to use its funds to renovate and expand existing schools for those children already in the school system. The new elementary school would be considered only after this work was complete.

CCBTC has experienced various levels of cooperation – and, on occasion, opposition – from Tunica County Schools, but has continuously worked to ensure that Tunica's schools are providing an equitable education to Tunica's students. It currently has a sympathetic majority on the school board and is working with the school board on administrative and school accountability.

Now that it has worked to address its district's most basic funding and structural needs, CCBTC has turned much of its attention to developing opportunities for Tunica's youth. In 1999, CCBTC worked with Tunica's youth to form Tunica Teens in Action. Recognizing that their school district, which has been in academic distress for a decade, has not fully prepared them for higher education or career, Tunica Teens in Action have developed a series of projects designed to address school issues and open pathways. They have designed a history documentation project, led college preparation workshops, and documented school improvement issues.

4. Eliminate high-poverty schools to bring an end to ethnic and social class isolation.

Local school districts should ensure that no schools have a high concentration of students living in poverty.

Educated people refuse to be poor, George Autry, MDC's founding president, used to say. But schools that contain a heavy concentration of young people from low-income families can stifle the education that would release them from poverty.

Unless the South moves as swiftly as possible to eliminate high-poverty schools, inequality will remain the heart of the matter in education. Arthur Levine, president of Teachers College, Columbia University, describes the nation, as well as the South, as having "a system of separate and unequal education" – not created by legal design but by the accumulation of innumerable choices made by communities and their residents. Inequality of education, he says, is "the most serious civil rights issue in America today."

The South has many county-wide school districts that serve a mixed-income population and can – given public will and leadership – devise student assignment plans to avoid creating schools with high concentrations of students in poverty. The family-income-based assignment policy adopted in Wake County, North Carolina, may offer a model for other metropolitan areas in the South. Wake is a thriving, fast-growing county, and its education officials see high-achieving public schools as a critical component of sustaining a high quality of life.

In some school districts, it is difficult if not impossible to achieve thorough integration of low- and middle-income children. The research of john a. powell, Executive Director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University, for example, demonstrates a tight link between high-poverty schools and economically segregated housing patterns. Where districts cannot eliminate high-poverty schools, they must provide extra resources to high-poverty schools to ensure adequate education for at-risk students.

Where entire school districts are so resource-poor that they cannot provide adequate education, it is essential for states to intervene by providing extra resources and/or encouraging regionalization.

Districts with the least tax resources, more often than not, are rural districts serving high-poverty populations. More than 40 states have been sued over school finance inequities, including every Southern state except Mississippi.

Because of slender budgets and isolated location, rural schools have trouble attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers. Often they lack other basics as well, from up-to-date textbooks to supplies and sound buildings. High-poverty urban districts have similar problems.

Merging small rural districts is often seen as the solution because economies of scale in school administration can release more money for instruction and other

necessities. But merger is not a cure-all. For one thing, when two or three poor rural districts merge, they still share the same minimal tax base.

Furthermore, many rural residents worry that consolidating small districts will lead to consolidation of schools, depriving their community of an important cultural centerpiece. This is a legitimate worry, and high schools take an especially heavy hit when it comes to consolidation.

Yet, just as rural communities have to work regionally on economic development, so, too, should they cooperate to enhance educational opportunity. Where possible, small districts should seek economies of scale by forging regional alliances to do joint purchasing and share facilities such as alternative schools or special education units. Distance education – using interactive video to share teachers across districts – can enable small, rural schools to offer advanced courses in math, foreign language, and other subjects. The same technology can provide rural teachers with professional development and access to advanced degrees. Community colleges, whose service areas span multiple school districts, also can provide advanced courses to high schools through interactive video. States should provide resources and grant waivers where necessary to facilitate such alliances.

In some cases – for example, where a small, rural county has multiple school districts, each top-heavy with administrators – merger may be necessary to free up more dollars for classroom instruction. When that occurs, it should be carried out with active participation of parents and community members as well as local school officials. Consolidating districts need not mean closing and consolidating schools. Regional school districts should provide administrative strength to assure that rural schools remain connected to their communities while offering wider educational opportunities to young people.

The state also has an obligation to augment funding for its resource-poor school districts. States get the biggest return on their investment – whether they choose to reduce class size, provide early childhood education, expand guidance counseling, or other strategies – when they target resources to students who are most in need.

5. Develop a corps of superbly trained, well-paid, professional teachers.

In 1996, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future proclaimed what it recognized as an "audacious goal" – that by 2006 the United States would "provide all students in the country with what should be their education birthright: access to competent, caring, and qualified teachers." No state in the South, or elsewhere, will meet that goal.

Policymakers may find it difficult to use budgets and legislation to ensure that a "caring" teacher stands in each classroom, but they can – and must – expand their efforts to raise the levels of competence and qualifications among high school teachers. A direct link exists between student performance and the qualities of the classroom teacher. In

seeking to make educational winners of its adolescents, the South should heed this clear message: "An investment in teacher quality is an investment in our future."

Faced with demographic destiny, every state must redouble its efforts to identify and train new teachers.

Over the next 10 years, some Southern states face rising student enrollment while others anticipate stable or declining enrollment. But regardless of enrollment trends, all states face the prospect of a sustained shortage of teachers, as tens of thousands of experienced, baby-boom-era teachers age out (or opt out) of the workforce. The average age of public school teachers nationally is 44.

The teacher shortage is a complex phenomenon, having to do with pay, location, and working conditions as well as demographic change. Schools in inner cities and in high-poverty rural areas have particular trouble hiring and retaining teachers. Across all districts, one in five young teachers leaves within the first three years.

States and school districts face a two-pronged challenge: to improve retention and distribution of teachers and, at the same time, to prepare more new teachers, and prepare them better.

In 2003, Florida needed to hire 16,000 teachers; Georgia, 12,000; North Carolina, 11,000; South Carolina, 5,500. According to the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, colleges and universities prepare only about 25 percent of the new hires needed annually.

Across the region, states should recognize the essential roles of universities, both as producers of more high-quality teachers and as catalysts for higher standards in public high schools. States should charge their schools of education with redesigning teacher-preparation programs so that they are aligned with the standards set by such organizations as the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. The South has an enormous, self-interest need to improve teacher training and to see that young teachers have mentoring and other professional enrichment in the crucial first three to five years of their careers. The region must redouble its efforts to attract capable college students to the teaching profession.

At the same time, the South should act with flexibility and creativity to develop pathways through which adults who want to change careers can become teachers. There is, of course, tension around what is known as "lateral entry." While business and civic leaders want knowledgeable adults in classrooms even if they have not had formal education training, many educators worry about entrusting classrooms to people without training in managing a learning environment and providing age-specific instruction. More so than elementary and middle schools, high schools stand to gain from experienced, educated adults with diverse professional backgrounds who have a desire to teach. States need to develop alternative routes to certification for career-changing adults. High school principals ought to have the flexibility to hire "adjunct" instructors on short-term contracts, as do universities and community colleges.

The South has a compelling need to retain incumbent teachers and to expand their professional development opportunities.

Principals and teachers will say, in all honesty, that they enter and remain in education for self-fulfilling and idealistic reasons, not for money. Still, state and local governments cannot ignore the plain truth that pay scales and financial incentives must be employed to drive toward a solution to the classroom-teacher crunch.

The Southern states ought to raise salaries so that principals, teachers, and counselors in the South are paid at least as well as in the rest of the nation.

Through pay raises and financial incentives to go beyond the bachelor's degree, several states have made efforts to upgrade their corps of teachers. The South ranks high in the list of states with the most Nationally Board Certified Teachers. North Carolina ranks first in board-certified teachers. Florida, South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, Oklahoma, and Alabama also rank in the top 10. North Carolina has 6,600 board-certified teachers – but that represents only 8 percent of its total teaching corps.

In a recent three-year study in North Carolina, a research team from the Urban Institute and the University of Washington found that elementary students taught by board-certified teachers made greater gains in achievement test scores than students of teachers who did not pursue or failed to obtain national certification. Gains for low-income students taught by board-certified teachers went as high as 15 percent.

In addition to financial incentives, states need to upgrade the everyday working conditions of teachers – ensuring adequate preparation time and common planning time with other teachers. Conditions that create a positive environment for teachers and bolster teacher retention also lead to better outcomes for students.

The key to retaining teachers – and to improving their teaching – is the creation of a vigorous, vibrant learning environment for teachers within the school. Creating and sustaining such an environment is the role of the principal, who should be viewed first and foremost not as the "instructional leader" but as "the leader of instructors."

Teachers with a passionate commitment to their students and with the ability to teach their subjects with a contagious fervor can transform high schools. A fired-up faculty, with teachers who work together to improve curriculum and who, in turn, have opportunities for sustained professional development, is an essential component of a high-quality high school.

The South needs to break up the systematic assigning of the most vulnerable teachers to the most vulnerable students.

America, says the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, has a "deeply rooted, deeply dysfunctional teacher development system. It is a 'system' only in the sense that it systematically consigns the most poorly prepared and least experienced teachers to our most vulnerable public school students."

Large financial incentives can be employed to channel well-prepared principals and teachers into hard-to-staff urban and rural schools that especially need their talents. Cash, however, represents only one type of incentive, especially for enticing experienced teachers to work in such schools. Incentives could also come in the form of housing assistance, loan forgiveness, and tax breaks. In addition, the South must provide expanded in-service programs that train teachers in how to work with classrooms of ethnic and income-class diversity.

The South should give every high school student not simply a chance at the benefits of a competent, committed teacher but rather a guarantee.

Epilogue

Southerners of 1954, whether white or black, could hardly have imagined what their region has become a half-century later. While it was at first met with discord and resistance, the *Brown v. Board* ruling propelled the South toward becoming a more just society and, not coincidentally, a more prosperous region. Removing the albatross of legalized segregation, accompanied by substantial gains in public and private investments, positioned the South to outrun the nation in jobs and population growth during the 1980s and 1990s.

The South is now a place where global enterprises have their headquarters; where new-economy metropolitan areas spawn creativity and culture; where blacks and whites share restaurants, classrooms, and voting booths; and, now, where Latinos increasingly make their livelihoods.

In the transformation of the South, strong public leadership made a difference, too. Even before the *Nation At Risk* report of the mid-1980s, Southern governors, both Democratic and Republican, had initiated pathbreaking proposals to expand and strengthen schooling in their states.

Terry Sanford set the standard for Southern governors during his early 1960s term as governor of North Carolina, and he went on to help found the Education Commission of the States. Others followed: Jim Hunt in North Carolina, William Winter in Mississippi, Lamar Alexander in Tennessee, Richard Riley in South Carolina, to name a few. It has become de rigueur in the South for a state's chief executive to want to be known as an "education governor."

Today, most Southern governors – as well as legislators, civic leaders, and business executives – understand the need for further investment in public education as a prerequisite for preparing their states to advance in the modern economy. The question is whether the South can muster the civic will, along with the persistent leadership, to knock down the barriers that still block so many young Southerners from participating to the fullest in the 21st Century economy and civil society.

As we have documented in this report, the South's public education system remains afflicted with separateness and inequality: not the separate education facilities defined by law that the Supreme Court found unequal in 1954, but a separate-ness defined in part by race and in part by economics.

Today, as in 1954, the South cannot afford to proceed on the basis of separate and unequal education. No one can fully foresee what the South will be like 50 years from now. But demographic and economic trends, already fully manifest, point directly to the need for more – and better – education for more young people, across lines of ethnicity and class, to prepare for the jobs of the future and to sustain American democracy. The

South cannot control the global economy or technological change – but it can, and must, equip more of its people to thrive in the economy and society that develop over the next five decades.

Appendices

Black/White Exposure in the South's Largest School Districts

District	State	1987*	2000*	Change*
GUILFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS	NC	74%	35%	-39%
ARLINGTON ISD	TX	73%	40%	-33%
ALDINE ISD	TX	41%	10%	-31%
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	60%	39%	-21%
GWINNETT COUNTY	GA	69%	49%	-20%
ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	47%	29%	-19%
COBB COUNTY	GA	64%	45%	-18%
CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS IS	TX	72%	54%	-18%
JEFFERSON PARISH SCHOOL BOARD	LA	49%	31%	-18%
CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS	NC	53%	38%	-16%
NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON COUNTY SD	TN	54%	38%	-16%
AUSTIN ISD	TX	34%	19%	-14%
BROWARD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	38%	24%	-14%
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH SCHOOL BOARD	LA	32%	19%	-14%
PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	VA	68%	53%	-14%
VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	VA	67%	54%	-13%
GREENVILLE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	SC	67%	55%	-11%
EL PASO ISD	TX	31%	21%	-10%
LEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	70%	59%	-10%
PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	75%	65%	-10%
WAKE COUNTY SCHOOLS	NC	67%	57%	-10%
DEKALB COUNTY	GA	16%	7%	-9%
FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	VA	60%	51%	-9%
FORT WORTH ISD	TX	25%	16%	-9%
NORTHSIDE ISD	TX	43%	35%	-9%
DADE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	14%	7%	-8%
DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	44%	36%	-8%
MOBILE COUNTY	AL	30%	22%	-8%
VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	69%	61%	-8%
CADDO PARISH SCHOOL BOARD	LA	29%	22%	-7%
DALLAS ISD	TX	12%	5%	-7%
JEFFERSON COUNTY	KY	65%	58%	-7%
SEMINOLE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	67%	61%	-6%
MEMPHIS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	TN	13%	8%	-5%
PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	36%	31%	-5%
BREVARD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	72%	68%	-4%
HOUSTON ISD	TX	11%	6%	-4%
FORT BEND ISD	TX	24%	21%	-3%
ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL BOARD	LA	4%	2%	-2%
SAN ANTONIO ISD	TX	7%	4%	-2%
ATLANTA CITY	GA	4%	3%	-1%
FULTON COUNTY	GA	18%	18%	-1%
POLK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	FL	62%	61%	-1%
KNOX COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	TN	44%	57%	13%

Source: *Trends in Public School Segregation in the South, 1987-2000*, John T. Yun and Sean F. Reardon, Harvard Civil Rights Project (data comes from NCES Common Core of Data).

**Percents refer to the percentage of white students in schools attended by the average black student. For example, in 1987 the average black student in Guilford County, NC, attended a school that was 74% white; in 2000 s/he attended a school that was 35% white – a change of 39 percentage points.*

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Any errors or oversights contained herein are, of course, solely the responsibility of MDC.

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Notes on Data and Analysis

Most of the data presented in this report refers to the "South" as defined in previous *State of the South* reports: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. There are a few exceptions, as indicated on charts: some data refer to the Census South, including Maryland, Delaware, and Washington, DC, and some refer to the Southern Regional Education Board region which includes the MDC states plus Delaware and Maryland.

Most of our demographic data (population change, educational attainment, employment by occupation, and child poverty) come from the U.S. Census; however, Figures 2.5 and 2.12 use Current Population Survey data. Data on job and population growth are from the Regional Economic Information Service (REIS) of the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce.

The 2000 Census introduced new, detailed categories for race and ethnicity. Our charts on educational attainment and child poverty (Figures 2.11, 2.13, and 2.14) show data for three groups: "black alone," Hispanic, and "non-Hispanic white alone." However, the totals shown on these charts include the whole population – those three groups plus Asians, Native Americans, and people of more than one race.

Our charts on population change by age and race (Figures 2.6 and 2.7) use the first two categories above (black alone and Hispanic). However, the third category in these charts includes everyone else – non-Hispanic whites, Asians, Native Americans, and people of more than one race. We used this unconventional grouping to highlight the impact of Hispanic and African American populations in the South.

Data on educational performance and outcomes in Chapters III and IV draw from a wide range of sources. They include: research reports and data from the National Center for Education Statistics; reports and on-line data from the Southern Regional Education Board; the Education Trust's *Education Watch Online*; the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education's *Measuring Up 2002: The State Report Card for Higher*

Education; estimates of high school graduation rates from the Manhattan Institute's Center for Civic Innovation; the American Council on Education's annual reports on the GED; various data from *Postsecondary Education Opportunity* newsletters; the Justice Policy Institute's reports on incarceration; and the Harvard Civil Rights Project's studies on resegregation. (For a full list of sources that contributed to our analysis, see the Sources and Resources list.)

The full text and charts of this report, along with those of previous *State of the South* reports, are available on the MDC website at http://www.mdcinc.org.

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